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Critical and Iconographic Reinterpretations
of three early Gothic Novels.

Classical, Medieval, and Renaissance Influences in
William Beckford's *Vathek*, Ann Radcliffe's *Romance of
the Forest* and Matthew G. Lewis's *The Monk*.

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Reference: MLA (7th edition)
Quotations reproduce original spellings and words

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Summary

The purpose of this doctoral dissertation is to investigate and better understand the multiple influences that, together with the development and spreading of literary translations (highlighted by Stuart Gillespie and David Hopkins), played an important role in the rise of the early Gothic novel at the end of the eighteenth century. While deeply inspired by and imbued with internationally recognised critical literature of the Gothic, this study avoids assuming the critical stances of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. It proceeds backward in time, scrutinizing the authors, their cultural background, their knowledge, and their eighteenth-century perspectives. The focus is concentrated on the first manifestations of the Gothic *genre* in the decades that followed the novelty introduced by Horace Walpole with *The Castle of Otranto* in 1764. The restricted *fin de siècle* timespan (1786-1796) of the early Gothic works that is explored in this thesis is inversely proportional to the high level of creativity and inventiveness of their authors. This dissertation aims at demonstrating that the pervasiveness and reiteration of Classical, Medieval, and Renaissance themes were consciously chosen and adapted to their plots by William Beckford (*Vathek*, 1786), Ann Radcliffe (*The Romance of the Forest*, 1791), and Matthew G. Lewis (*The Monk*, 1796), whose novels were an interesting and unusual syncretism of literary, cultural, and iconographic ideas and resources that they absorbed both from their contemporaries and, most importantly, from authors of the past. The three novels analysed in this thesis were written before, during, and after the French Revolution, which has been taken by many as a point of reference for and as a cause of the Gothic. The aim of this study is also to demonstrate that the association with the French Revolution is a critical convention *a quo*, which does not take into consideration Gothic peculiarities that already existed before the dramatic events in France. Other important aspects included in this investigation are the function of architectures, landscapes and iconographies in the novels. The dissertation is divided into five parts. The first part introduces the major themes and the rationale behind this investigation together with the motivation for embarking on a study on the Gothic. The central body is represented by three chapters. Every chapter analyses one novel and underscores its connection with authors such as Lucretius, Virgil, Ovid, Dante, Boccaccio, Shakespeare, and many others. The fifth chapter contains the conclusion and the future hypotheses of investigation brought about by this research. The bibliography features a variety of source texts and translations that were known to the novelists examined in this dissertation. The three Gothic writers' language inevitably reflected and echoed themes and styles inherited from authors of different epochs. An iconography annex introduces a series of paintings and images that showed relevant associations with Gothic beauty, mystery, and horror.

1. Introduction and Rationale

1.1. The Mystery of Gothic Genesis

Reactions to early Gothic fiction were mixed from its first appearance in 1764 with the publication of Horace Walpole's *The Castle of Otranto*. Afraid of negative opinions, Walpole (1717-1797) used a pseudonym and presented the novel as a translation of a medieval Italian manuscript. He explained in the preface that his choice was due to the "novelty of the attempt to bend the two kinds of *romance*, the ancient and the modern". Caught by surprise, critics tried to find reasonable motivations for the public's enthusiastic reception.¹ Although Walter Scott (1771-1832) only partially appreciated Gothic literature, he contributed to raising awareness of the *genre*, to which other authors and poets, especially the Romantics, became indebted, despite their reluctance to admit its influence. In his introduction to the 1811 edition of the *Castle of Otranto*, Scott defined the novel as "remarkable not only for the wild interest in the story, but as the first modern attempt to found a tale of amusing fiction upon the basis of the ancient *romances* of chivalry" (Wilmarth Lewis viii).² In spite of its success, scholars considered the Gothic *genre* as a secondary form of literary production, especially when Walpole's example was followed by other writers, many among them women. The Gothic became the object of scrutiny in different periods, starting from its development during the second half of the eighteenth century until the present day.³ Michael Munday investigated the attention that early critical reviews paid to the Gothic. Even if only some writers, such as Samuel Richardson (1689-1761), Henry Fielding

(1707-1754) and Laurence Sterne (1713-1768)⁴, were generally recognised as accomplished authors, literary magazines took Gothic production into consideration even though the reputation of the novel, in general, and of the Gothic, in particular, was rather low. Critics had a tendency to “hit out at the Gothic novel, the *bête noire* of both the *Edinburgh* and the *Quarterly*” (205). Munday explains that John Wilson Croker had expressed the desire to “expose the raving nonsense which novel readers are content to receive as sublimity and pathos” (206). The severe critic reprehended both Gothic authors and their avid readers. The critical remarks exposed circulating libraries scarce cultural contents as well. Munday mentions the critic John Gibson Lockhart, active at the beginning of the nineteenth century. He dismissed William Godwin’s *Caleb Williams* (1794) for its “gliding phantoms and unearthly horrors” (211). Similar judgements were usually directed towards contemporary Gothic works. Scholars and critics became increasingly sceptical with the propagation of the Gothic trend.⁵

Nevertheless, the interest aroused by a form of literature based on the horrid was immediate. Gothic novels were considered different from previous forms of fiction and it may have been thought that highly esteemed authors were exempt from any Gothic contamination. However, even if from a slightly ironic point of view, Ian Watt identifies the first element of Gothic architecture in one of Fielding’s most famous novels. He claims that “Fielding is some way from Richardson’s particularity. He gives no full interiors, and his frequent landscapes descriptions are conventionalized. Nevertheless *Tom Jones* (1749) features the first Gothic mansion in the history of fiction” (27).

Alfred E. Longueil considered Walpole the initiator of a new linguistic and literary nuance of the word 'Gothic', thanks to his definition of the *Castle of Otranto* as a "Gothic story":

Critical terms, like other speculations, have their ups and downs. So it has been with the adjective gothic. The term had its inception humbly enough as a Germanic race-name. But because the Goths, being Teutons, conceived and built upon an ideal of beauty foreign to the world they overset; and because mediaeval men, fashioning their new world, rebuilt it nearer to the Teutonic than the classic heart's desire; and because to Renaissance sceptics the Gothic ideal, wrought in castle and cathedral, seemed dark and thwarted beside the measure of a Parthenon, it came to pass, in the early Renaissance, that the term "gothic" took on a new and coloured meaning, a meaning that masked a sneer. To the Renaissance, Mediaeval or Gothic architecture was barbarous architecture. By a trope all things barbarous became "Gothic".
(453)⁶

Longueil also traces a history of the word in its various forms which was also employed by Geoffrey Chaucer (1343-1400) and William Shakespeare (1564-1616). During the seventeenth century the term still bore derogatory connotations.⁷ After being used in a negative way for centuries, it acquired a different connotation in the era of the Enlightenment:

During the eighteenth century, (...) the Gothic also began to be invested with a set of different and contradictory values in both aesthetic and political terms. This resulted from the reclamation

of a native English past that played a crucial role in the eighteenth century of a literary and political nationalism.

(Punter and Byron 4)

The ambiguity of the term was great. Samuel Johnson (1709-1784) considered “Goth” as “one not civilized, one deficient in general knowledge, a barbarian” (Longueil 455), an idea that had been shared by John Dryden (1631-1700), who considered the “Gothique manner” as a synonym of “barbarous”(455, note 11). Curiously, Walpole’s real opinion about the term has never been objectively determined. An essay on Gothic architecture was published towards the end of the century and it exalted the superiority of Northern and Germanic medieval forms.⁸ Punter and Byron conclude that “like the Goths themselves, ‘Gothic’ as a term is endlessly mobile” and its levels of ambiguity can be verified in the different declinations of the idea in the various novels written at the end of the eighteenth century.

The Gothic prospered in parallel with the diversification of the *genre*. The chronological contiguity with Romanticism created contrasting ideas concerning their analogies and distinctions. Whereas some scholars consider them antithetic, others have identified a single mainstream uniting the Gothic and the Romantic. Anne Williams claims that there cannot be any distinction as “Gothic and Romanticism are one” (*Art of Darkness* 7), while Michael Gamer observes that there is apparently no synthesis between the two movements because of Romantic “dismissiveness and hostility” towards the Gothic (*Romanticism and the Gothic* 11). Besides, readers and critics’ negotiations tend to determine *clichés* of literary category and periodization.⁹ Robert Hume

highlights the analogies between Gothic and Romantic even though he does not consider them a single entity.¹⁰ Hume also defined the chronological limits of Gothic between 1764 and 1820.¹¹ His conclusion is that “the early Gothic novels are precursors of Romanticism in their concern with sensibility, the sublime and the involvement of the reader (...) [even though] in its highest forms romantic writing claims the existence of higher answers where Gothic can find only unresolvable moral and emotional ambiguity” (289).

The Gothic is sometimes located in a nebulous area, which corresponds to Pre-Romanticism, a sort of hiatus between the Enlightenment and Romanticism. In some cases Pre-Romanticism is seen as the initial manifestation of the movement, which exploded at the beginning of the nineteenth century.¹² When the Marquis de Sade (1740-1814) wrote his *Idée sur les romans* around 1800, he justified the Gothic as the natural consequence of revolutionary horrors. Ronald Paulson made a distinction in the literary production before and after the degeneration of the revolution with the episodes of *The Terror*¹³. On the contrary, Thomas Weiskel considered the Gothic more orthodox than revolutionary. Edmund Wilson, among others, highlighted British writers' rejection of the French Revolution.¹⁴

After its apparent conclusion in the 1820s, the Gothic was revived later during the nineteenth century. It continued to prosper and expanded its focus on horror, with fear being embodied by different forms of horrific stories in multiple geographic contexts and different chronologies. As a consequence, critical appreciation of the controversial phenomenology of horror and terror multiplied and differentiated.¹⁵

In his essay on Umberto Eco's (1932-2016) *Foucault's Pendulum* (1988), Ruggero Puletti highlighted how the novel reflected the general growing taste for the gloomy, the mysterious and the horrifying. Eco's story as well as other contemporary works, written at the end of the twentieth century, seemed to confirm the revived curiosity for inexplicable dark events that Puletti connected to the apparent rebirth of millennial theories.¹⁶ Coincidentally, a growing number of essays taking into consideration the Gothic *genre* flourished in the early 1980s, and this trend is ongoing today. In spite of renewed critical attention the Gothic remains intriguingly mysterious. George Haggerty claims that "Gothic resists attempts to explain it" ("Queer Gothic" 383). From psychoanalytical perspectives to post-modern interpretations, from gender literary theories to social and historical analyses, criticism on the Gothic has provided numerous hypotheses on the *genre*.¹⁷ Moreover, it has tended to expand the Gothic chronologically reversing its traditional time limits. David Punter and Fred Botting have reconsidered the subject several times. Their focus is on the diversification of Gothic production and their interest has been progressively widening to include contemporary variations. However, an exhaustive analysis of the ramifications of the Gothic is difficult to carry out because of the proliferation of horror stories. The intermingling of *genres* and media in the culture of postmodernism has further complicated the definition of Gothic. A conspicuous part of the critical effort on the Gothic has concentrated on a multiplicity of apparently recurring themes. Some relevant studies concern the meaning of geographical locations, the function of architectures and the peculiarity of landscape descriptions.

However, the tendency is to generalize these *topoi*, turning them into stereotypes.

Gothic plots are generally thought to be set in Italy - a country traditionally associated with mystery and crime. However, the percentage of Gothic novels written during the second half of the eighteenth century, whose location is exclusively in Italy, is curiously low.¹⁸ Despite Italy being the favourite destination for The Grand Tour on account of its beauty and culture¹⁹, the country became the imaginary place of terrible crimes, unfathomable mysteries and unspeakable horrors.²⁰ Italian architectures and landscapes were foreboding of either anguish or doom when inserted into Gothic fiction.²¹

Architecture, in particular the castle, has been long defined as a form of metaphorical labyrinth and as a system of symbolic values in the early Gothic. Interpreted as a psychoanalytical device, representing “the inside”, it is thought to play an important role for the development of Gothic plots. Nevertheless, it is interesting to notice that not all Gothic novels are based on the existence of castles. However, the architectures featured in the plots do not generally belong to the Gothic period.²² A further contradiction is that gothic architecture was the recognized symbol of Northern Countries.²³ On the contrary, dark Gothic contexts and Northern atmospheres were applied to Mediterranean countries, and to Italy in particular. Interestingly, Italy, generally reproduced in picturesque representations, was characterized by brilliant light and peaceful images, thus creating a sort of literary and cultural oxymoron.²⁴ Painter and engraver, Giovanni Battista Piranesi (1720-1778) drew phantasmagorias of ancient Roman monuments that were essential in determining new sensibilities for his

anguishing descriptions of nightmarish and labyrinthine architectures that played an important role in forging new iconographies.²⁵

A painting from around 1760 by an anonymous German artist depicts a person sitting on the left under a tree surrounded by a dark landscape full of antiquities and dominated by hovering clouds in a stormy sky. In spite of being encompassed by a nature, which is dramatic and menacing, the character enjoys his position in the middle of the wilderness. It is a portrait of the famous art historian and archaeologist Johann Joachim Winckelmann (1717-1768), who spent most of his time in Italy discovering the secrets of ancient architecture. While Piranesi exalted Roman antiquity, Winckelmann was the promoter of Greek models.²⁶ He was one of the many figures that influenced artistic reception and ideas on Classicism in Europe.

Interactions and contrasts between castles, abbeys and ruins and natural settings can be found in late eighteenth-century novels. Like architecture, nature is reputed to be an important ingredient in early Gothic production as it represents “the outside”. However, nature was not an invention of the Gothic.²⁷ It could be found in previous narrations during the eighteenth century, although protagonists experienced practical elements of nature.²⁸ Critical awareness about nature increased during the century as landscape was exalted by Johann Wolfgang Goethe (1749-1732), Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) and the Graveyard Poets, among others, whose works were categorized as part of pre-romantic sensibility. The growing literary prominence of sublime atmospheres and the taste for mysterious locations is linked to the description of landscapes in art. The sublime was in direct connection with the growing importance of

landscape.²⁹ Edmund Burke's (1729-1797) *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757) and Immanuel Kant's (1724-1804) philosophical theories on perception³⁰ re-invented the classical notion of sublime inherited from antiquity.³¹ Interestingly, nature is not always a predominant factor in the Gothic novel. Although superficially described by Walpole and Sophia Lee (1750-1824)³², ignored by Clara Reeve (1729-1807), and scarcely present in Matthew Gregory Lewis (1775-1818), nature is a dominant theme in William Beckford (1760-1844) and Ann Radcliffe (1764-1823)³³, albeit for different reasons.

Eighteenth-century paintings by the French Antoine Watteau (1684-1721), François Boucher (1703-1770), and the Italian Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (1696-1770) abounded with descriptions of natural settings, but their style was decorative and idyllic, as they introduced mythological and bucolic themes within pleasant places. Tiepolo's contemporaries Canaletto (1697-1768) and Francesco Guardi (1712-1793) frequently depicted city views. However, their mysterious settings uniting architectural ruins and unusual landscapes, the *Capriccio*, became popular as the technique conveyed picturesque and melancholy impressions.³⁴ Other contemporary painters, equally itinerant in various countries in Europe, such as Francesco Casanova (1727-1802), Philip James De Louthenbourg (1740-1812), and Claude Joseph Vernet (1714-1789), specialized in landscapes which influenced taste and artistic reception. Several British painters were instrumental in the appreciation of nature. Richard Wilson (1714-1782), among others, was significant for his role in connecting the picturesque ideal with an Italianate landscape. In the previous century, Nicolas Poussin (1594-

1665), Claude Lorrain (1600-1682)³⁵ and Salvator Rosa (1615-1673)³⁶ had painted majestic landscapes of great visual impact³⁷ that were to influence both art and literature.

1.2. Rationale behind this study

The “long eighteenth century” was an overflowing and culturally challenging period, when literature, art, philosophy and science progressed admirably.³⁸ Many ideas flourished and spread to different countries. The exuberant search for knowledge was accompanied by a strong will to classify, catalogue and arrange learning in order to make it available for both experts and illiterate masses. The French *Encyclopaedia* was one of the first attempts to explain science and culture, and make them accessible to mankind. A great novelty for the time was the idea of popularizing art. Museums were open to show the most beautiful images of the present and of the past. The *Uffizi*, a prominent gallery in Florence, was opened to the public in 1743 and attracted interest for the richness of its collections.

It was in this superabundant cultural period that the Gothic novel bloomed. As stated, the Gothic has either been considered as a separate entity or has been included in the ambiguous notion of Pre-Romanticism. I would claim however that Enlightenment and Pre-Romanticism chronologically coexisted and that the Gothic was embedded in the cultural flux of the age of reason, and expanded into the Romantic zone.³⁹

The focus of this study is concentrated on the first manifestations of the Gothic *genre* in the decades that followed the novelty introduced by Walpole. The restricted *fin de siècle* chronology of early Gothic production is inversely

proportional to the high level of creativity and inventiveness of the novels published during the last decades of the eighteenth century. After some years of apparent calm, a new wave of Gothic novels was published between the 1780s and the 1790s. My analysis includes three novels that were published in the time span of a single decade between 1786 and 1796, in a coincidental sequence of five years' distance from one another. All three were successful and were absorbed into the Gothic category. I proceed chronologically following their dates of publication: Beckford's *Vathek* (1786), Radcliffe's *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) and Lewis' *The Monk* (1796).

These three novels were written before during and after the French Revolution, which has been taken by many as a point of reference for the Gothic *genre*. However, I would rather posit that connections with the French Revolution are a critical convention *a quo*, which does not take into consideration Gothic peculiarities that already existed before the dramatic events from 1789 onwards.⁴⁰

In my exploration of the early Gothic, I wanted to verify the existence of certain aspects that critics have attributed to the genre. I have decided to use a critical perspective going backwards in time. However fascinating psychoanalysis and post-modernism may be, I wanted to exclude them from my research. I tried to determine what influences the three authors may have received from their education, readings, and cultural experiences. Stuart Gillespie and David Hopkins' theories on literary translations were particularly illuminating for understanding cultural dissemination, both conscious and unconscious, in the period, which is the target of my research.

I wanted to discover how and why nature was important in the works I selected and whether landscape was the signal of a particular influence. Interested in the sublime, I also wanted to ascertain the function of the picturesque, and identify connections with classical pastoral atmospheres. Studying the function of wild nature in various literatures, Simon Schama reveals that a disheartening incident happened to Walpole during a Grand Tour, crossing the Alps around 1738. The episode is useful for understanding the new sensibility to landscape. The “sense of delightful horror” (Schama 443) experienced by Walpole passing the Alps is intriguing because it shows how, in a period apparently dominated by Augustan measure and enlightened rationalism, there was a lurking need for dramatic events to excite body and mind. When Walpole and the poet Thomas Gray (1716-1771) were exalted by the terrifying and dangerous chasms in the Alps, the tumults and the horrors of the end of the century were not even conceivable.⁴¹

A critical analysis on the early Gothic may seem superfluous in consideration of the remarkable quantity of rich and exhaustive studies on the subject in general, and on the three authors in particular. As I intended to discover more on Beckford, Radcliffe and Lewis, all critical hypotheses were useful and inspiring to start my research that proceeded towards new fields of investigation. My aim was to identify unusual aspects of the intriguing and mysterious genesis of three early Gothic achievements.⁴²

¹ Mentioning negative critical opinions on phantasmagoria, Fred Botting compares it with Gothic literature, which was equally composed of “absurdities”. With the passing of time and the creation of *Gothic* clones, critics hoped for the approaching end of this kind of narrative, which actually never came (*Limits of Horror* 101).

² Thanks to his lifelong collections of all things Walpolian, W. Lewis was instrumental in the creation of the Walpole Lewis Library at Yale University, one of the most renowned collections of eighteenth century literature in the world.

³ With the exclusion of a number of articles in specialized reviews, literary historians in the first half of the twentieth century either minimized the importance of the Gothic or did not even consider it worth mentioning in their anthologies and studies. David Daiches considered the Gothic as “a dilettante interest in the Middle Ages”, in *A Critical History of English Literature* (II: 740). The American scholar Samuel Chew completely ignored it. Anne Williams (*Art of Darkness*) shows how twentieth-century eminent critics such as F. R. Leavis, Wayne Booth and Ian Watt, who exalted the realistic tradition of fiction, definitely excluded Gothic authors from their critical analyses. The Italian scholar Elio Chinol compiled various anthologies of English literature, which provided minimum elucidations about the Gothic. It was necessary to wait for Northrop Frye to obtain a reevaluation of the genre, defined as *Romance* (*Art of Darkness* 1-2).

⁴ Richardson was the author of two popular epistolary novels *Pamela* (1740) and *Clarissa* (1748), caricatured in *Shamela* (1741) and *Joseph Andrew* (1742) by Henry Fielding, who also wrote the successful *Tom Jones* (1747). Sterne wrote the experimental *Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* (1761-1767) and *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* (1768).

⁵ Robert Miles defined the phenomenon as “effulgence of the Gothic” (*Gothic Writing*). Williams provokingly suggests that “twentieth century keepers of the House of Fiction have always treated Gothic as a skeleton in the closet” (*Art of Darkness*).

⁶ Wittily summarized and historically pertinent, the concept was not completely exact. The Goths that had been the first wave of people to invade and conquer the Roman territory represented the last drop that caused the collapse of the Empire. Specialised in the forging of arms and in handicraft, they did not generally build monuments but limited themselves to using (or abusing) existing Roman structures. Moreover, the architectures that were to be defined as Medieval, that is Romanesque and Gothic, were not the works of the long-gone Goths.

⁷ Longueil brings evidence by citing Edward Waterhouse’s (1619-1670) work on the great fire of London, which was published in 1667, one year after the disaster. Waterhouse had used the expression “Gottish and Vandalique fire” (454), synonyms of destructive and violent.

⁸ The author was Sir James Hall and he claimed that the flamboyant Gothic was an example of perfection, especially when compared to the poor Italian Gothic that “only Vasari, who had never crossed the Alps,” could describe in positive terms. The *Essay on the Origins, History, and Principles of Gothic Architecture* was published for the first time in 1797.

⁹ Gamer underlines the problematic dialectics between Gothic and Romantic because of their “adjacency and overlapping”. He claims that the “Gothic perpetually haunts, as an aesthetic to be rejected, Romanticism’s construction of high literary culture” (*Romanticism and the Gothic* 7). Miriam Wallace’s collection of miscellaneous essays identifies links between the Enlightenment, the Augustan Age, Pre-Romanticism, Romanticism and the Gothic.

¹⁰ “That Gothicism is closely related to Romanticism is perfectly clear, but it is easier to state the fact than to prove it tidily and convincingly. There is a persistent suspicion that Gothicism is a poor and probably illegitimate relation of Romanticism, and a consequent tendency to treat it that way” (R. Hume 287).

¹¹ *Melmoth The Wanderer* (1820), written by Charles Robert Maturin (1782-1824), is considered the last example of the early Gothic phase. However, like many other critics, R. Hume does not follow his own delimitation as he extends the Gothic to other periods. He includes both English and American authors of later periods in his analysis. Miles slightly widened the period backward by starting the Gothic in 1750.

¹² William Blake (1757-1827) is an example of this ambiguity. He is included amongst the Romantics in certain anthologies whereas he is considered as a Pre-Romantic either for being about a decade older than William Wordsworth (1770-1850) and Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834), or for the difficulty to categorize his unique literary creations. Clifford Siskin claims that the stereotypes created by the so-called Romantic authors entrapped both readers and critics into forming a false idea about a movement, based on the erroneous Romantic concept of timeless imagination, which pretended to have elements in common with artistic forms of all times. Just as Stephen Greenblatt redefined the notion of Renaissance, Siskin's neo-historical criticism casts a totally different light on the literary production of the early nineteenth century.

¹³ Paulson argues that "The Gothic did in fact serve as a metaphor with which some contemporaries in England tried to come to terms with what was happening across the Channel in the 1790s" (534). He also explains 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" (Paulson 537). Paulson also mentions the Gordon Riots that took place in 1780 (Alluded to in Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*). He claims that Walpole's Manfred and Lewis' Ambrosio are the embodiments of Revolutionary oppressors whereas the Gothic castle is but a metaphor for the horrors taking place inside the Parisian Bastille. I would posit that while the idea might be adapted to the literature produced after the 1790s, it cannot explain the changes in taste and the beginning of the Gothic *genre*, which had started decades before the traumatic events of the French Revolution. Neo-Marxist critics, such as Raymond Williams and Terry Eagleton, interpret the birth of Gothic as a signal of tension within the Georgian period of the eighteenth century while society was changing because of the Industrial Revolution.

¹⁴ His article "A Treatise on the Tales of Horror" appeared in the *New Yorker* on 27 May 1944. He also gave an ironically negative opinion of the Gothic *genre* at the same time wondering about its unpredictable survival: "One had supposed that the ghost story itself was an obsolete form; that it had been killed by the electric light".

¹⁵ R. Hume posits "Among the novels of the period 1764-1820 a distinction seems necessary between the novel of 'terror' and the novel of 'horror'. This distinction has its origin in the aesthetics of the mid-eighteenth century. As Mrs. Radcliffe puts it, "Terror and horror are so far opposite, that the first expands the soul, and awakens the faculties to a high degree of life; the other contracts, freezes and nearly annihilates them.... Neither Shakespeare nor Milton by their fictions, nor Mr. Burke by his reasoning, anywhere looked to positive horror as a source of the sublime, though they all agree that terror is a very high one. In short, terror opens the mind to the apprehension of the sublime, while (according to Mrs. Radcliffe) the repugnance involved in horror closes it". (285). However, I would stress that the distinction may not be so mechanical. *The Romance of the Forest's* protagonists experience feelings of terror and horror that are interchangeable and partially in contrast with Hume's statement.

¹⁶ It is known as the belief in the doctrine of the Millennium, which was mentioned in the *Book of Revelations*. Punter and Byron analyse the influence of the Millennium theory extensively (*Spectral Readings*).

¹⁷ Back in 1995 Maggie Kilgour thought that Gothic criticism had "swelled with increasing rapidity" (221). Suzanne Rintoul identified "the problem of defining the Gothic in the face of its ever-expanding criticism" (702). Jerrold Hogle provocatively claimed that "Gothic fiction is hardly Gothic at all" (*Companion to Gothic Fiction* 2). Chris Baldick and Robert Mighall posit that Gothic criticism emerged from the confluence of two antithetical strands of modern Romanticism in the 1930s: on the one side, the reactionary medievalism of (...) Montague Summers, and on the other the revolutionary modernism of (...) the surrealists" (269). The problems they detect in contemporary Gothic Criticism is also an excess of post-modernism and an anti-realist stance.

¹⁸ *The Castle of Otranto, A Sicilian Romance* (1790) and *The Italian* (1797) are set in Italy. However, the most relevant novels belonging to the Gothic are not located in Italy: Clara Reeve, *The Old English Baron* (1778), Sophia Lee, *The Recess* (1785), William Beckford, *Vathek* (1786), Charlotte Smith, *Emmeline* (1788), Ann Radcliffe, *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1789), Ann Radcliffe, *The Romance of the Forest* (1791), Matthew Gregory Lewis, *The Monk* (1796), Regina Maria Roche, *Clermont* (1798).

¹⁹ Many famous people visited Italy during the Grand Tour. Writers as Goethe, Tobias Smollett (1721-1771), and Laurence Sterne as well as painters: Richard Wilson, Joshua Reynolds (1723-1792), Joseph Wright of Derby (1734-1797), Alexander Cozens (1717-1786). They represent just some emblematic examples among the many who chose Italy as their cultural destination.

²⁰ In spite of not being a nation yet as it was still under the different domains of other European countries, North and South separated by the Papal State, Europeans visualized Italy as a specific place with a single identity. Scholars both Italian (Ernesto Galli Della Loggia, Aurelio Lepre) and non-Italian (Denis Mack Smith) have taken the problem into consideration. The Austrian Minister Metternich (1773-1859) claimed that Italy was simply a geographical notion.

²¹ I would claim that a possible explanation for this duality of vision lies in the impact of the Inquisition that was active in Italy and other Catholic countries ever since the long and unsuccessful Council of Trento, back in the second half of the sixteenth century. The Council had been meant to settle the differences between the Church of Rome and the Lutheran creed, but the dramatic clash simply worsened. The Holy Tribunal's methods were abhorred, especially in Protestant and Anglican countries, where Catholicism was looked upon with suspicion. The Inquisition is often present in early Gothic novels.

²² The Gothic building in the *Castle of Otranto* is probably in the author's mind but it cannot really be deciphered as Gothic in style. Lee Morrissey claims that the introduction of "architectural technical terms such as 'subterraneous passage, several intricate cloisters, battlements in the tower' increase the possibility of the castle's existence" (124). It is difficult to accept this statement integrally. Walpole used a terminology that indicated cultural knowledge but did not provide a concrete description of a castle. What Walpole described was probably connected to the idea of Gothic that he personally developed in the building of his Strawberry Hill mansion. The eighteenth century was characterized by the creation of artificial architectures and instant ruins, imitating an imaginary past, which were fashionable in the gardens of aristocratic mansions.

²³ Madame de Staël (1766-1817) wrote *De l'Allemagne* in 1810. She absorbed some of Montesquieu's (1689-1755) ideas and applied them to her essays on culture and literature where she reiterated the differences between Northern and Southern countries. Her novel *Corinne, ou de l'Italie*, was published in 1807. Loathed by Napoleon, it was not well accepted in France for the negative descriptions of the French character but it was appreciated all over Europe. The themes that can be found in the work make it a multifaceted masterpiece. Considered as travel literature for its descriptions of various Italian places, it contained proto feminist elements expressed by the eponymous character. It is also an ideal union of Northern and Southern contrasts in the romantic passion involving the Italian Corinne and the Scottish Lord Nelvil.

²⁴ In his *Spirit of the Laws* (1748), Montesquieu had already noticed the basic differences between Northern and Southern countries where he had expressed a first form of anthropological analysis with his theory on the influence of climates. His text clearly influenced de Staël.

²⁵ In Richard Wendort's words "Piranesi's views of Rome had such a profound influence on the cultural imagination of the late eighteenth century, in fact, that the images themselves became yet another superimposition with which the modern eye would have to contend. In his *Italian Journey*, written in the 1780s and published in 1816, Goethe confessed that his first sight of the

ruins of Rome had failed to measure up to Piranesi's views of them, and Horace Walpole urged his contemporaries to "study the sublime dreams of Piranesi, who seems to have conceived visions of Rome beyond what it boasted even in the meridian of its splendour... Savage as Salvator Rosa, fierce as Michael Angelo, and exuberant as Rubens, he has imagined scenes that would startle geometry" (162).

²⁶ Winckelmann gave his influential *History of Ancient Art* to the press in 1764, when Walpole was publishing *The Castle of Otranto*. Winckelmann, like Goethe, was fascinated by Italy, its majestic past and its present ruins. His *Thoughts on the Imitation of Greek Works* (1755) was equally important for a new vision on Antiquity. John Fuseli (1741-1825) considered the text revolutionary and translated it into English.

²⁷ Nature and landscape were included in masterpieces of previous epochs. Classical masterpieces abounded with description of nature. Between the end of the Middle Ages and the beginning of Humanism, picturesque natural surroundings acquire a new status. Boccaccio's (1313-1375) *Decameron* (1351) features a nature that is no longer the allegorical symbol of divine presence, but it becomes an ideal place, a *locus amoenus*, where suggestive sceneries and peaceful agricultural activities are the inspiring frame for narration. Ludovico Ariosto's (1474-1533) *Orlando Furioso* (1516) presents actions that take place in forests which offer contexts both beautiful and mysterious. Renaissance painters provided materials to enhance the original visual description of wild nature in Gothic. Although the Renaissance exalted symmetry, harmony and the human form, it introduced the focus on nature and on mysterious landscapes, as in Leonardo (1452-1519), Titian (1480/85-1576) and Giorgione (1478-1510) and other important artists of the period.

²⁸ An example can be found in Daniel Defoe's (1660-1731) *Robinson Crusoe* (1719). The protagonist is immersed in nature. However, natural elements are instrumental as they are meant for the protagonist's comfort or represent ordeals to put him to the test.

²⁹ The sublime can be traced back in Dante's (1265-1321) horrific vision of nature, uttered at the beginning of the *Divine Comedy* (1308-1320), which is ideally linked to Gothic atmospheres, in spite of being created almost four hundred years before their development (taken from *Princeton University Dante Project*).

Midway in the journey of our life
I came to myself in a dark wood,
For the straight way was lost
Ah, how hard it is to tell
The nature of that wood, savage, dense and harsh –
The very thought of it renews my fear!
It is so bitter death is hardly more so.

³⁰ It must be noted that the essay containing explanations about the sublime in Kant appeared in his *Critique of Judgment*, published in 1790, a long time after the beginning of the Gothic trend in novels.

³¹ The idea of the sublime was originally discovered and defined by Greek and Latin authors. Longinus, Lucretius and Virgil were aware of the sublime and they either described its effects or they used its rhetorical potential for high impact descriptions.

³² Melissa Sodeman considers Lee's descriptions as historical paintings: "Painting and history here appear as forms that memorialize, alternately, the 'most striking characteristics' of body and soul. For Lee, paintings of historical subjects are able to represent the outward shape of history by depicting the actions of public figures during historical cruxes. History, which captures 'the soul', goes further by shedding light on some of the inwardness of historical experience that painting excludes" (6).

³³ David Durant paradoxically posited that the Gothic was not really part of Radcliffe's works because of her use of nature as her special device: "against the chaotic universe, [she offers] the lost world of the pastoral. Her ideal is much more pleasant than the Gothic underworld or the modern world that it symbolizes" (529). Directly interwoven with protagonists' feelings and with sublime visions, descriptions of landscapes took up symbolic roles during climatic events in her novels. Jayne Elisabeth Lewis argues that "neither the earliest reviews of her novels nor the critical inquiries of the present day have much managed to separate the fruits of her literary labours from contemporary theory and practice of the visual arts. Predictably, attention focuses on the landscapes so compulsively rendered in all of her major novels - ostensibly natural scenes whose extreme detail and even more extreme conventionality stamp Radcliffe as a "pictorialist" in the manner of the great landscape artists of her century and the one preceding. Though these artists - conventionally listed as Rosa, Poussin, and Claude - diverged rather dramatically in style, Radcliffe appears to have mediated effortlessly among them." (378). However, nature is just one of the constituents of Radcliffe's narratives.

³⁴ The *Capriccio* technique is supposed to have been introduced by the view painter Giovanni Paolo Panini (1691-1765) from Placentia who established his workshop in Rome. The technique was also used by Marco Ricci (1676-1730), a painter from Belluno (Titian's birthplace), who resided in England at different periods.

³⁵ Lorrain came to be known as "Claude", a convention widely accepted in the English idiolect of art, as can be seen in the major catalogues of the London National Gallery or in art essays, which use his name to define the painter.

³⁶ Both Walpole and Beckford owned paintings by Salvator Rosa.

³⁷ Renaissance, seventeenth- and eighteenth-century artworks likely had an important role in the growing sensibility to landscape. While The Grand Tour was an occasion for the discovery of Antiquities and new countries, painting workshops in Italy, and especially in Rome, attracted painters from all over Europe who learned new techniques and at the same time observed landscapes and architectures that they brought to their countries of origin. Poussin, Lorrain, and Salvator Rosa together with Italian, British and Dutch seventeenth-century productions gave predominance to natural settings and were influential both in painting and literature.

³⁸ Frank O'Gorman's idea of the chronological expansion of the century originally applied to British history (1688-1815), has been adapted by critics to literature (Marion Wallace, among others), both British and European.

³⁹ 1798 is the year of Wordsworth and Coleridge's *Lyrical Ballads* that inaugurated Romanticism, but it is also the year when Regina Maria Roche (1764-1845) published *Clermont*, a Gothic story abounding with terror and suspense.

⁴⁰ Or, at least, the notion of the influence of revolutionary events should be exclusively applied to the Gothic production belonging to the 1790s. However, the French Revolution *per se* cannot alone explain the germs of the sublime, of the supernatural or the taste for strange architectures and dramatic landscapes. The new sensibility existed before the tragic events took place.

⁴¹ Schama explains "What they were interested in, along the high mountain passes, was not a true epiphany with the omnipotent Almighty, but an experiment in sensation (...) Where earlier mountain travellers had recoiled from mountain terror, Walpole and Gray revelled in it" (445).

2. The Classical and the Gothic: Lucretius, Dante and Exoticism in William Beckford's *Vathek*

2.1. An Unusual Multilingual Narrative

William Beckford's *Vathek* introduces a series of problems, which have not been solved in spite of the large number of in-depth studies of the work. The first problem that has perplexed many critics is the linguistic dualism of the work, which first appeared as an English translation in 1786 by Samuel Hensley¹, who decided to publish it anonymously without Beckford's permission (Boyd Alexander, Roger Lonsdale), followed by Beckford's original French version in 1787. Beckford had completed the text in 1782, when he was only twenty-two years of age. Moreover, different editions of the novel, both in English and French, appeared between the 1790s and the first decades of the following century. As Lonsdale, Kenneth Wayne Graham ("*Vathek* in English and French"), André Parreaux (*William Beckford*) and others explain, these later editions contained several changes and revisions that were quite evident compared to the originally published texts.² The reason why Beckford decided to write *Vathek* in French has been thoroughly analysed by several critics. Graham's studies aim at demonstrating "the authority of the English version", which is considered prior to the French one only by a restricted number of scholars ("*Vathek* in English and French"; '*Vathek*' and the *Escape from Time*). The question was never satisfactorily clarified.³ One possible motivation is that Beckford spoke French as fluently as he did English.⁴ A further baffling aspect is that Beckford entrusted other people with both the translation of his work into English and the correction

of the French text, and that he spent months, even years, revising and modifying both versions personally. Adam Roberts and Eric Robertson's claim is that "[t]he textual status of *Vathek* is interestingly unsettled. It straddles English and French, and although Beckford originally wrote the work in French, which suggests that the English version (...) is a 'translation' with all the associations that word carries with it, the situation is not as simple as it might appear" (199) In fact, they explain that the novel did not follow the traditional trajectory of a text that is published then translated. In particular, they posit that the translation becomes a sort of "hermeneutic endeavour" involving the reader. I would claim that a motivation for not writing in English, which has generally been overlooked, may have been dictated by his young age and lack of linguistic expertise necessary to complete an Oriental tale. His stays in Switzerland and France had provided him with a variety of linguistic models that he could copy. One of the most cogent problems that Beckford faced prior to publication of the text was a sexual scandal that almost ended his political career and threatened to see him stand trial for sexual intercourse with William Courtenay. Thus it may be likely that Beckford was trying to keep public attention away from his name; writing the work in French (and translating it later into English) would make the connection between the author and the book more difficult to detect.

The sources of the text represent an additional aspect that has required extensive research. Studies on *Vathek* have concentrated on Oriental works and French tales in imitation of Eastern narratives, which are undoubtedly very important in one of the most bizarre and mysterious texts in English literature, but the classical side of his work has generally failed to arouse much interest.

Although Beckford's contemporary critiques and reviews tended to appreciate *Vathek* and connect it to great authors of the past such as Dante, Ariosto and John Milton, the latent analogies were not sufficiently examined. In spite of the recognition of the author's vast knowledge, the existing classical aspects in the unusual novel have not generally been explored as its Oriental themes seem to entirely permeate the story.⁵

Furthermore, the *genre* of the novel could not be determined with certainty. A number of critics have not defined *Vathek* as Gothic (Miles, Botting, Kilgour, Gamer, Elisabeth Napier, and Maurice Lévy, among others), and have not included it in their analyses of the Gothic novel. Some critics, such as Emma Clery and Markman Ellis, dedicate but a few lines to Beckford's work "whose acceptance was made easier by the addition of scholarly notes, written by Henley and edited by Beckford, which were universally praised for their erudition and cited at length in reviews" (Clery 90), in a historical period when terms such as "caliph" or "genie" were not yet common in the English language.⁶ Diego Saglia ("William Beckford's Sparks of Orientalism") as well as Ros Ballaster and Laurent Châtel see Beckford's work as belonging to the rich phenomenon of the Oriental Renaissance in Europe in the eighteenth century. In particular, Saglia includes *Vathek* in the Romantic critical discourse whereas Châtel considers it a handicap for Beckford's text to be included in the Gothic. John Garrett claims that Beckford's novel is not "a simple veneer" (16) but a deeply specialized text, centred on themes from the East, despite the interference of a Christian perspective in the *finale*. Other scholars identified sublime and picturesque aspects in the work, which, added to the gloomy conclusion of the story, allowed

them to include the text in the Gothic current.⁷ A number of scholars between the 1920s and 1960s described *Vathek* as a genuine example of Gothic fiction (Parreaux, Devendra Varma, Eino Railo).⁸ In more recent years, Frederick S. Frank included Beckford's text in his annotated Gothic bibliographies and connected the novel to the Gothic. Ian Duncan includes Beckford in his analysis of *romance* and the development of Gothic whereas Sandro Jung claims that the architectural variety in *Vathek* is a pre-configuration of the Gothic that will be absorbed by authors during the next decades.

The supernatural and magic arts in *Vathek* may seem to convey a further confirmation of the intrinsic Gothic nature of the story, even though Beckford's introduction of bizarre situations and grotesque adventures creates doubts about the true essence of the uncommon novel. I will proceed first by analysing the critical literature on *Vathek* and Beckford's sources, both literary and artistic. Then I will examine the text from a different critical perspective and identify potential analogies with classical works of Antiquity that may have influenced the young Beckford in the creation of his bizarre story. In addition, I will try to determine what further influences can be found in the novel. My intention is to study Beckford's work from a different point of view and demonstrate that the sources of his Eastern literary fantasy are complex and that the Oriental mould is one of the novel's many facets.

2.2. Education and Luxury. The Progress of *Vathek*

In his analysis of the Gothic, Ellis maintains that William Beckford probably considered his scandalous work justified in virtue of the fact that he was a gentleman. Glancing at Beckford's varied and eclectic production, we may

argue that he had a taste for hyperbolic narrations and for provocation from a very young age when he wrote incomplete imaginative stories and *The Biographical Memoirs of Extraordinary Painters* (1780)⁹, published when he was twenty. He had also written some remarkable narrative experiments before he turned seventeen.

A sense of superiority might have been present from an early age if we are to believe an anecdote told by Alexander, who reports a tantrum Beckford threw at five: the crisis came about when he learnt from his father that one of their ancestors was of humble origins. Alexander also reports that Smollett had highlighted the vigour, tenacity and intelligence of Beckford's father, Alderman Beckford (1709-1770), while he was in the House of Commons. However different, his son had inherited many aspects of his father's personality (Parreaux *William Beckford* 28-9). I would argue that Beckford's feeling of superiority was probably shared by Horace Walpole and, to a certain extent, by Matthew Lewis, even though Walpole was a real aristocrat¹⁰ whereas Beckford and Lewis were considered *parvenus*¹¹ as they were never able to obtain a peerage, no matter what their wealth was. Whether Ellis's hypothesis is acceptable or not, it is clear that the three writers' high social status, financial situation, education, and political careers may have given them a nonchalant sense of superiority, even though a mark of infamy was latently hanging on Beckford and Lewis due to the latter's problematic publication of the *Monk* (universally considered obscene), and the former's sexual scandals.¹² The three men belonged to extraordinarily rich families and their resources were virtually unlimited¹³, although Walpole and Beckford squandered a lot turning their architectonic dreams into real abodes.

Lonsdale and Parreaux (*William Beckford*) explained that Beckford was the richest of them all and that he was nicknamed “England’s wealthiest son” by Lord Byron (1788-1824) - a definition that was used by Alexander to entitle his study of the loquacious but inscrutable writer.

Observing their experiences, both literary and political, not to speak about the ambiguity of their private lives, we may consider Beckford as an ideal heir of Horace Walpole and Lewis’ symbolic predecessor, even though they do not seem to acknowledge each other in their writings or correspondence.¹⁴ Notwithstanding their apparent reciprocal indifference, I would posit that Walpole, Beckford and Lewis form a very interesting triad in the history of literature during the second half of the eighteenth century because they created literary *divertissements* and *pastiches*, which became peculiar literary phenomena. Their works acquired importance with the passing of time, and revealed unsuspected depths of meaning. It may be argued that their extreme wealth made them feel entitled to tread on unusual literary paths even though this is more a hypothesis than a rational criterion to define their works. Walpole did not receive a special epithet, following the *Castle of Otranto*, but he became the master of Strawberry Hill, the mansion that was to reproduce the architectural Gothic ideal he had conceived in his mind and that he partially described in his pseudo-historical *romance* of a medieval aristocratic family. Beckford and Lewis were respectively dubbed the “caliph” and the “monk”, connecting them with the ambiguous protagonists of their strange stories.

Beckford was similar to Walpole in the development of a bizarre architectonic dream that was to become real with the majestic modifications of

Fonthill Abbey, the mansion built by his father. Whereas Walpole's Strawberry Hill still remains and has become a museum, Beckford's residence was to crumble to pieces just a couple of years after he had sold it for an impressive sum in 1823. He had spent a lot of money and run into debt for the strange modern Gothic building. Fonthill Abbey was an even more extreme exaggeration of a Gothic *reverie* than Strawberry Hill, but very little remains of it nowadays. Fortunately the second and final Beckford residence in Bath can still be admired today (Rictor Norton "A Visit to Fonthill").

Beckford's creativity was the result of various cultural influences, extensive readings and an unlimited imagination. Artists such as Philip de Louthenbourg and the Russian expatriate painter, Alexander Cozens, played an important role for the impressionable boy. Cozens was his drawing master and represented a father-like figure. He promoted his pupil's eclectic interests and encouraged him to use his imagination (Parreaux *William Beckford*). Painter of ruins and dramatic landscapes, master of theatrical effects for the stage, de Louthenbourg organized the celebrations of Beckford's coming of age as well as the Christmas house party that he still remembered in his mature years (Lonsdale; Alexander). Beckford described the effects created by the artist of the *mise en scène* as a wonderful work of illusion, beyond space and time, which was "the realization of *romance* in its most extravagant intensity" (Lonsdale xii). The rich scenery that pervaded the atmosphere of Beckford's estate provided the twenty-one-year-old with ideas for the composition of his novel that he claimed he had started writing immediately thereafter. He variously described the strong impressions that he gained from de Louthenbourg's spectacle and highlighted

the influence of the highly emotional event on more than one occasion: “I composed *Vathek* immediately upon my return to town thoroughly imbued with all that passed at Fonthill during this voluptuous festival” (John Walter Oliver 91; Parreaux *William Beckford* 204) or again “I wrote V[athek] upon my return at the close of this romantic *villeggiatura*”¹⁵ (Parreaux *ibid* 205).¹⁶

2.3. Varieties of Orient and other Influences

James Folsom claims that the unusual novel may have been the only serious work produced by Beckford, as his “other fictional endeavours other than *Vathek* are completely satirical and, more important, are satires of ‘polite’ eighteenth-century fiction” in a sort of “*reduction ad absurdum* of the artificialities” of the literary production of his times (55). Beckford’s novel represents a cultivated and intellectual *divertissement* that highlights the author’s knowledge and appreciation of Middle Eastern customs and culture. It also includes his aesthetic predilection for French tales introducing the Oriental fashion, which was steadily developing in Britain¹⁷ through the growing number of translations from French and Arabic. The Oriental mania had started at the end of the seventeenth century and had developed in various European countries, where either precious handicrafts or literary works coming from different Asian countries attracted major interest. Beckford’s love for Orientalism developed when he was very young (Parreaux, Alexander, Lonsdale), but this was an indistinct taste for anything exotic coming from Asia.¹⁸ Later on, he focussed on fairy tale atmospheres that he amalgamated with his Western knowledge.¹⁹

Following Parreaux’ studies, Lonsdale identifies some important Oriental influences for *Vathek*, among which *The Arabian Nights* appear to be relevant.

This text actually represented the most popular European discovery of the East through fiction. What Robert Mack underlines is crucial to understanding how Beckford could have come in contact with the Orient: “The publication of the French Orientalist Antoine Galland’s translation²⁰ of *Alf Layla wa Layla* as *Les Mille et une Nuits* in twelve volumes from 1704 to 1717 represented the earliest appearance in Western Europe of the collection of stories commonly known as the *Arabian Nights Entertainments* or (rather more accurately) *The Thousand and One Nights*. Galland’s approximately forty-eight individual narratives were drawn from more than one cycle in the Arab collection, and it is important to stress that even today there is not – nor could there ever be – a text of the *Nights* that could claim to be truly definitive or even complete”(470).²¹ Mack explains that they were translated anonymously in scrapbooks and published by Andrew Bell, then by W. Taylor between 1718 and 1721. This version “was to remain the sole English version of the *Nights* until the nineteenth century” (471). The scholar also claims that the impact of the work on English readers can be hardly overestimated and his hypothesis is that it would probably form “a subtext in Gothic-influenced novels” (472) as well.²²

Besides the *Arabian Nights*, several texts were available, both in English and in French, when Beckford started writing his novel. He could choose among historical essays, exotic fantasies or ironical tales. Western example of literature imitating Eastern sources had also been created by one of Beckford’s ancestors, Anthony Hamilton (1646-1721).²³

The philosophers Montesquieu and Voltaire (1694-1778) adopted the style of the Oriental tale in some of their works for philosophical reasons.

Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* (*Les Lettres Persanes*), published in 1721 and translated by John Ozell 1722, used exoticism to ridicule French society through the eyes of naive Persian visitors in Paris. However, Montesquieu's ideas were borrowed from the Italian Giovanni Paolo Marana (1642-1693), author of the *Letters Written by a Turkish Spy* (1684), translated into French in 1686, and rendered in English by William Bradshaw (starting from 1687). According to Ros Ballaster, Marana was the first to start the Oriental tale in Europe, featuring "one of the most familiar 'Oriental' voices for readers in eighteenth century prose, (...) the male 'reverse' or pseudo-traveller, a fictional correspondent who travels from East to West and writes of his experiences" (145). Coincidentally, Marana's "collection of letters was produced in the year after the Ottoman defeat in Vienna in 1683, which marked the beginning of the long retreat of Ottomans in mainland Europe" (41-42). Marana's popular stories and his deistic approach were appreciated by Daniel Defoe, who wrote the *Continuation of Letters written by a Turkish Spy at Paris* (1718), extending the time of the story until 1693.

Voltaire made his characters move in distant Eastern lands so that he could criticize his contemporary society. Lonsdale argues that "Beckford seemed very close to Voltaire's purposeful, penetrating, rational irony" (xxvi) and also that some contemporary reviewers detected analogies with the French philosopher.²⁴ My claim is that philosophical stories such as Voltaire's *Zadig* (1747) share only some superficial aspects with *Vathek*. The common aspects are the Oriental settings, the young protagonists and supernatural events.²⁵ One possible parallel between the two authors can be found in a comic episode in *Vathek*, when the caliph is entertained by a variety of religious exponents,

worshippers of different creeds, all united in a sort of sacred meeting.²⁶ In spite of being a religious authority himself, Vathek has a sardonic attitude. Beckford's ironic stance is intended to be humorous whereas Voltaire's deep moral criticism has the specific goal of changing the evils of society.²⁷ I would rather argue that the distance between the two authors is more evident than their similarities.

The importance of the poem *The Seven Fountains* by Sir William Jones (1746-1794) is sometimes highlighted for supposedly having connections with Beckford's tale, underscored by Peter Knox-Shaw. Jones' Eastern fantasy, which was written in 1767 and published in 1772, received great critical acclaim. The elegant poem, based on one of the stories in the *Arabian Nights* collection, mixed the Oriental atmosphere with classical tones from Antiquity and aesthetic descriptions. It obtained attention and appreciation from contemporary readers and poets such as James Beattie (1735-1803), and even from bluestocking women writers such as Elisabeth Carter (1717-1806) and Elisabeth Montague (1718-1800). The young protagonist in the allegorical poem explores the mysteries hidden behind a series of doors when he lands on a magic island, after navigating a distant sea.²⁸ It might be useful to notice that the imagery connected to the fountains can be found at the beginning of *Vathek* when the protagonist develops an infinite thirst, provoked by the Giaour. However, Beckford's development of the plot is different from Jones', and he abandons the aesthetic representation of the fountain in favour of other concepts and different images. We may reasonably posit that the only connection between the two authors lies in the extreme aesthetic taste and, most importantly, in the latent classical atmospheres.

Many details in Beckford's novel can be found in a very important historical work, published in France for the first time in 1697. This was the *Bibliothèque Orientale* (Lonsdale, Ballaster), written by Barthélémy d'Herbelot (1625-1695), which featured a sort of encyclopaedia of Oriental culture and was reprinted various times during the eighteenth century. Together with translations of the *Arabian Nights*, d'Herbelot's work contributed to the dissemination of eastern customs in Europe and introduced new words into the English language.²⁹

Beckford's translator not only amply illustrated the meaning of new and foreign words in the novel but also provided the names of important authors in the explanatory notes.³⁰ These long explanations trace a remarkable number of cultural sources that can partially explain the intellectual development of the story.³¹ One of the merits of Beckford's novel is the cultivated and didactic apparatus, which accompanies the narration, meant to help the reading process and to improve the knowledge of readers.

Although Beckford interspersed his work with erudite Oriental ingredients, I would highlight that it is possible to discover the existence of multiple cultural levels beneath the excessive aestheticism of the surface.

2.4. Gothic and Romantic in *Vathek*

If Dani Cavallaro's axiom is true, then *Vathek* belongs to Gothic fiction. In fact Cavallaro argues that "in much early Gothic fiction, darkness is the locus of torment, punishment, mystery, corruption and insanity" (26). Punishment and torment are evident characteristics in the novel, especially in its final gloomy and dramatic pages, let alone insanity, which seems to possess all the characters in

the story. Moreover, if we follow Williams and her argument about “the supposedly common fantasy, which is the desire to escape the reality” in the Gothic (*Art of Darkness* 11-12), we can find further evidence to justify the inclusion of *Vathek* in the *genre*, even though Williams is against categorizing such an ambiguous literary current and creating “boundaries” for it. Following Eugenia DeLamotte’s steps, she claims that “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” (13). Jung asserts the importance of the Gothic in *Vathek*, which he defines as “Beckford’s attempt to construct a multigeneric tale of Gothic didacticism” by using “physically manifested architectural forms” that can make the novel move “towards a generic identity created by a repertoire” later extensively “integrated” into Gothic stories, “therefore theorizing and regularizing the emerging Gothic *genre*” (302).

Beckford’s love of grotesque situations and sardonic descriptions of the protagonist’s exaggerations are misleading and make it difficult to define the text’s *genre* with certainty. However, I would argue that the number of frightening and mysterious situations in the novel is quite high and, in spite of the overall ambiguity, it reveals Gothic contexts. The devilish Giaour, desirous of innocent victims; the cruel Carathis, manoeuvring and murdering other characters with her dark magic; the anguishing gloom in the Palace of Eblis; all of these contribute to make *Vathek* a very dark kind of Gothic story with a dramatic finale without redemption.

Jung argues that Radcliffe and Lewis developed themes that had been introduced, albeit in nucleus, by Beckford's *Vathek*. My claim here is to find elements that unite the publications of the last two decades of the eighteenth century, and in particular the features that Beckford's text has in common with Radcliffe and Lewis' novels, together with the relevant aspects of latent Classicism characterizing their works. Sharing Radcliffe and Lewis' destiny, Beckford has inspired critical analyses that have set about finding connections between his life, and the characters described in his most popular work.³² Beckford was diametrically opposed to Radcliffe, as the latter spent her entire life hiding her biographical details, while the former was delighted to talk and write about them with not a small amount of exaggeration. However, both authors undergo the same contingency and their works are scrutinized in order to identify biographical data or hidden psychoanalytical explanations. In reality, I would say that their real interest and originality reside in the fact that they introduced narrative innovations. They were to influence subsequent literary works, something which has been certainly recognized but frequently overlooked in favour of post-modern studies of their works, or of psychoanalytical studies of their personalities. Alexander and Parreaux, among others, consider Beckford's characters as alter egos. Russ Gill carries out a reverse operation. Starting from David Hume's (1711-1776) definition of the mind as a theatre and that "perception is inseparable from the activity that records it"³³, the scholar proposes to use *Vathek* not as a hidden biography but as a text that has moulded the writer and his life.

The four major characters in *Vathek* have been identified with Beckford and the people who played an important role in his life at the age of twenty-two.³⁴ The characters, two men and two women, seem to represent the Aristotelian primeval category of male and female, which stands for the dualism of good and evil in the universe. However, Beckford confirms and reverses the dyad as he introduces a negative force in the male category (Vathek), and a positive aura in the female (Nouronihar). Moreover, the most innocent of all characters, the effeminate Gulchenrouz does not have male characteristics as he is similar to “a girl dressed up as a boy” (86).

The story is puzzling for its peculiar way of moving in one direction before suddenly changing its tone or going against the reader’s expectations - a technique Beckford repeated obsessively.³⁵ Folsom reports that, with the exception of the solemn final portrayal of Eblis, the extreme and sudden changes in tone were deprecated by critics such as Martha Pike Conant because they found them characterized by “mockery, coarseness and flippancy” (54). I would rather say that Beckford constantly shifts his narrative technique when most unexpected in order to shock his potential readers, as if he rejected being encased in a specific category of *genre*.

Beckford used his taste for paradox and the grotesque in his novels. However, his private correspondence and travel diaries introduce a different mode of writing, full of sensibility and romantic imagery. A passage where he describes the remains of the dying winter in his house garden is particularly suggestive and recalls Virgilian scenes in the *Georgics* when snow melts to allow the arrival of spring:

Last night (...) I stole from the Saloon and, led by a glimpse of moonshine between the arcades of the Egyptian Hall, went out at the Southern Portal. The dissolution of the snow next the pavement had left round it a narrow circle of verdure beyond which all was white. A grey mist had risen from the waters and, spreading over the lawn, seemed to enclose the peaceful Palace on every side. Thro' the medium of these vapours the moon cast a dim bluish light just sufficient to discover the surrounding woods, changed into groves of coral. I was so charmed with the novelty of the prospect that, setting the cold at defiance, I walked to and fro on the platform for several minutes, fancying the fictions of Romances realised, and almost imagining myself surrounded by some wondrous misty barrier. (Alexander 74)

This short text reveals the writer's power of imagination and taste for the mysterious. A restricted space is more than enough for the young man to imagine strange stories developing behind the "grey mist" slowly surrounding the objects.

Notwithstanding the Oriental effulgence and some Gothic dark images, especially in the *finale*, *Vathek* is not exempt from Romanticism:

Not knowing where she was, [Nouronihar] turned her eyes on all sides, as if to recognize the surrounding scene. This singular lake, those flames reflected from its glassy surface, the pale hues of its banks, the romantic cabins, the bullrushes, that sadly waved their drooping heads (79)

The emir's daughter has just woken from a long induced dream, the fruit of her father's strategy to frustrate Vathek's dangerous love. She feels a sense of

nostalgia. While still convinced that she is dead, she explores the place where she has been hidden with her cousin Gulchenrouz. The landscape seems to be magical. It coincidentally attracts the unsuspecting caliph, who plans to seduce the wonderful girl in spite of the emir's subterfuge. A series of interesting passages emphasizes the beauty of nature in such a way that it is possible to find a line of connection with subsequent Radcliffean descriptions of nature and later developments of romantic sensibility:

At the distance of a few miles from Samarah stood a high mountain, whose sides were swarded with wild thyme and basil, and its summit, overspread with so delightful a plain that it might have been taken for the Paradise destined for the faithful. Upon it grew a hundred thickets of eglantine and other fragrant shrubs, a hundred arbours of roses, entwined with jessamine and honeysuckle, as many clumps of orange-trees, cedar, and citron, whose branches, interwoven with the palm, the pomegranate, and the vine, presented every luxury that could regale the eye or the taste. The ground was strewed with violets, hare-bells, and pansies: in the midst of which numerous tufts of jonquils, hyacinths, and carnations perfumed the air. Four fountains, no less clear than deep, and so abundant as to slake the thirst of ten armies, seemed purposely placed here, to make the scene more resemble the Garden of Eden watered by four sacred rivers. Here the nightingale sang the birth of the rose.... (13)

This long passage is extremely rich both from a descriptive and a thematic point of view. Such luxuriant and abundant nature in a prose description was a novelty at the time. Images of nature had been developed in the poems by the

Graveyard Poets and in James Thomson (1700-1748) in *The Seasons* (1730)³⁶, but they were generally excluded from prose narratives. It is difficult to determine whether Beckford's intention of describing landscapes in a great variety of passages was dictated by his aesthetic taste or by other motivations. In his in-depth analysis, Fulford indicated the political importance of any discourse connected with landscape in the eighteenth century, including Thomson and William Cowper's (1731-1800) poetic works, S. Johnson's generalizations³⁷, Burke's text on the sublime, William Gilpin's (1724-1804) essays on the picturesque, and Uvedale Price's (1747-1829) comparative study of sublime and picturesque. Fulford's hypothesis is intriguing as he provides a special justification for the growing importance of landscape and nature in various forms of art: "Through landscape-gardening, through painting, and through the descriptions of prose-writers and poets, views of the landscape owned by gentlemen became representations of the legitimacy of their power and the benefits it brought the nation. (...) Eighteenth-century writers were able to rework Virgilian epic and georgic into a panegyric on the national benefits deriving from a landscape 'naturally' productive of wealth, viewed from the commanding position of the noblemen and gentlemen who owned it" (3). A different case is represented by Richard Payne-Knight, a gentleman with a large estate known for his libertine free-thinking. His ideas on the picturesque were inevitably in sharp contrast with all of the previous authors as he presented "the rural scene as a pleasure ground in which the man of taste could find sexual symbolism in the wildness of nature" (130). Accordingly, the most beautiful landscape scene in *Vathek* is where the sensual seduction takes place.³⁸

Whatever his intentions might have been, such aesthetic attention to nature makes of Beckford a precursor of Radcliffe's descriptions and of the romantic exaltation of natural settings. The second important aspect is that the passage clearly appeals to the senses and to their exaltation, following Lucretius' doctrine of the exaltation of the physical world that I analyse later. The third important factor is Beckford's initial introduction of Vathek's court as a sort of Garden of Eden, which is in contrast with the tragic ending of the story. Descriptions of charming landscapes, such as the following example are common in the text until the final turn of events when dark atmospheres dramatically replace the dominant beauty:

The evening was serene, the air refreshing, the sky clear, and the flowers exhaled their fragrance. The beams of the declining sun, whose mild splendour reposed on the summit of the mountain, shed a glow of ruddy light over its green declivity, and the white flocks sporting upon it. No sounds were heard. (25)

The scene offers an example of bucolic calmness ("serene" "declining sun" "green declivity") and pastoral peace represented by the "flocks sporting" on the green hill. However, if one eye is turned to the classical image inherited from Virgil, the other one is facing a horrible lurking danger. It is the "dreadful chasm", where innocent children are going to be sacrificed.

Beckford does not seem to be involved in the contemporary discourse on the sublime and the picturesque. Nevertheless, his constant quest for the beautiful and his love for romantic settings before its time betray a special sensibility, however frequently interrupted or preceded by an insinuating irony. The description of a terrible storm first introduces satirical commentaries that

make the situation humorous, in spite of its potential negativity. The register of the narration subsequently changes and conveys Burkean ideals:

The females and eunuchs uttered shrill wailings at the sight of the precipices below them, and the dreary prospects that opened, in the vast gorges of the mountains. Before they could reach the ascent of the steepest rock, night overtook them, and a boisterous tempest arose, which, having rent the awnings of the palanquins and cages, exposed to the raw gusts the poor ladies within, who had never before felt so piercing a cold. The dark clouds that overcast the face of the sky deepened the horrors of this disastrous night, insomuch that nothing could be heard distinctly.

(45)

The storm is important because it shows a violent nature in contrast with the sweet landscapes that the caliph has abandoned. The strange events take place when Vathek starts his quest for the talismans of power and the Hall of Eblis, pushed by his mother's greed. The passage we saw before, showing a bucolic and pastoral description (*Vathek* 25), did not include sublime images, according to Burkean rules: "Among the colours, such as are soft or cheerful (except perhaps a strong red which is cheerful)³⁹ are unfit to produce grand images. An immense mountain covered with a shining green turf, is nothing, in this respect, to one dark and gloomy: the cloudy sky is more grand than the blue; and night more sublime and solemn than day" (149). On the contrary, the description of a violent nature dominated by the "horrors" of the "night" conveys stronger emotions. Interestingly, the passage of the tempest (*Vathek* 45) contains several allusions to unbearable sounds which are essential in the creation of violent

emotions.⁴⁰ The use of the word “horrors” (106,113,115), which can be found in Beckford’s text when frightening events take place, is frequently accompanied by the term “terror” (46, 70, 89, 106, 107, 110, 113, 115), whose frequency is interestingly high, anticipating in this sense the Radcliffean technique. The passage on page 45 offers also an analogy with the description of terrible winds in the sixth Book of Lucretius’s *Nature of Things*: “When the Winds strike violently upon the Clouds, this may produce a Noise; for we see the branched Clouds, with their rough edges, are driven about in various Manners; as the Blasts of South West Winds, blowing hard upon the thick Woods, the Boughs give a Sound, and the Branches rattle through the Air” (Lucretius VI, 129-134; 2: 245). It is possible to state that Classicism is an omnipresent force interspersing the most diverse works with its essence.

2.5. Real and Literary Magic

The dialectical contrast between Enlightenment and darkness has been investigated by a number of scholars who have drawn attention to the co-existence of problematic shadows during the age that exalted reason, science and tolerance. After presenting Denis Diderot’s (1713-1784) rational entry on ‘Magic’ in the *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire Raisonné*, meant to disabuse men of the dangers of superstition, Lizanne Henderson claims that “during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there were not always clear-cut distinctions made between magic, the occult, demonological theory and science.⁴¹ The combination of astrology and medicine, for instance, continued to play a role in some medical procedures (...) Scientific techniques were being employed by some in hopes of finding proof of the spirit world, second-sight and paranormal

phenomena” (23-24). John Fleming’s study is even more extreme as he concentrates on the dark side of Enlightenment and on the strange personalities that populated that epoch. Giuseppe Balsamo, also known as Count Alessandro Cagliostro (1743-1795), was one of those ambiguous figures that embodied mystery. His strange story and the dichotomy of his persona, never satisfactorily clarified, became legendary and attracted the interest of the masses as well as of powerful people such as bishops, politicians, aristocrats and monarchs. The German poet Goethe was so intrigued with his adventurous life that he decided to personally investigate Cagliostro’s story at his place of origin, Sicily, during his Grand Tour in Italy, which he later described in his *Italian Journey* (1816). Having grown up in dire poverty, Balsamo, alias Cagliostro, escaped from the monastery where his relatives had sent him.⁴² An adventurer, a forger and a swindler, he was accused of being involved in the *Affair of the Diamond Necklace*⁴³ but was later acquitted after being imprisoned in the Bastille for some months. Later, he was condemned by the Roman Inquisition and sent to prison where he spent the last six years of his life.⁴⁴ Interestingly, Cagliostro became friends with de Louthenbourg, who he met during his two stays in London, and when he moved to Switzerland. Alexander claims that the young Beckford might have met the pseudo necromancer and taken part in some of his Masonic rites, invited by de Louthenbourg. Traces of mysterious rituals can be identified in Beckford’s works and in *Vathek*.

Although it is possible that Beckford may have been attracted by freemasonry and esoteric rites in real life, I would also argue that the magic we can find in his works has various important literary sources. Two years after

Beckford's death, Percy B. Shelley's (1792-1822) friend, the British author and critic Leigh Hunt (1784-1859), published a collection of selected poetic extracts named *Stories from the Italian Poets* in 1846. That the literary miscellany included Dante, Ariosto and Torquato Tasso (1544-1595) may not be surprising⁴⁵, but the inclusion of both Luigi Pulci (1432-1484) and Matteo Maria Boiardo (1441-1494) was not so common a choice.⁴⁶ Two decades before, the British Museum librarian Antonio Panizzi (1797-1879) had published a series of volumes devoted to the rich analysis of the "Romantic narrative poetry of Italians", which contained critical commentaries and long passages of the same authors chosen by Hunt, plus some commentaries on Petrarch and Boccaccio. I would like to stress that the term "Romantic" that is used in Panizzi's title conveys different meanings from those that we connect with the same word nowadays. What I would like to stress is that including poets from the Middle Ages, such as Dante, Petrarch and Boccaccio, or poets from the Renaissance, such as Pulci, Boiardo and Ariosto, under a general category at that time was acceptable as the distinction between the periods was yet to be determined.⁴⁷

What I find enticing is that all of the Italian authors in those collections had supplied ideas for *Vathek* to a greater or lesser extent. While Dante's imagery dominates the last part of the novel, the intake from Ariosto and the other Renaissance poets is prevalent in the whole story. Ariosto's chivalric narration, mixed with supernatural and *romance*, featured Oriental aspects. It might be interesting to recall that Angelica is an exotic beauty from the distant Cathay, the land of mystery, and her seductive modes entangle the Paladins, who become oblivious to their duties, in the same way as the beautiful Nourinihar

attracts Vathek and makes him forget his quest. Nouronihar's "beautiful eyes", "languishing looks" and "fair complexion" (65-66) are the tokens of temptation.⁴⁸ Vathek is seduced in the middle of nature, like Orlando and Rinaldo. In spite of his temples of the senses, where he could enjoy infinite delight, when he is surrounded by a beautiful and mysterious landscape, he becomes the victim of love for the first time. Pulci, Boiardo, Ariosto and, partially, also Tasso, offered Beckford a rich material, including spells, supernatural creatures and witchcraft. Alcina, Morgana, Melissa, Armida are some examples of the witches that populate the works of the Renaissance poets; some of them are the bearers of cruel and dangerous magic. The philosophical demon Astaroth in Pulci, presumably Marsilio Ficino's spokesman⁴⁹, introduces the logic of Neoplatonist freedom, somehow connected with Lucretian atheism, which is latent in Vathek. The inept wizard Atlante recalls the failures committed by Beckford's characters, such as the emir and the eunuchs. Beckford inherits multiple aspects of the Italian authors such as Pulci's comic effects, Boiardo's sensuality and magic and Tasso's sense of inevitable pessimism. Ariostean suggestions can be traced in *Vathek*, which are sometimes explained in the notes to the novel: "the talismans" (130), "the simurgh" (138), "the magical tablets" (139), "the fountain of Merlin" (159) are devices recalling Ariosto's resourceful universe.

The omnipresence of magic is one of the peculiarities of Vathek. Strange rites, human sacrifices, summoning of ghouls and other strange creatures are singularly frequent in the story. Magical events and the supernatural dominate the scene on many occasions even though several of their manifestations are accompanied by a veil of sarcasm. The most ambiguous character is Vathek's

mother. Indeed, Carathis is “like a chameleon” to the vizier Morakanabad because she “could assume all possible colours” (38). She is an astute politician, well aware of the importance of the power that she manages ruthlessly in place of her son, too preoccupied with sensuous attractions. She performs strange ceremonial rituals in her high tower where she reads the messages of the stars and keeps bizarre creatures. She is the one who pushes Vathek to sacrifice the children to the hideous Giaour in order to acquire a mysterious key and the talismans of power. When she joins her son in his quest for the hall of Eblis, she completes dangerous demonic liturgies in a cemetery, indifferent to the number of victims that she leaves behind. Like the giantess Eriphila, who rides a hideous and enormous creature to chase Rinaldo in the seventh canto of *Orlando Furioso*, Carathis starts her journey in search of Vathek with an equally horrible creature:

[Carathis] whirled herself round in a magical manner, which struck Morakanabad with such terror as caused him to recoil, she ordered her great camel Alboufaki. (...) The night was uncommonly dark, and a pestilential blast blew from the plain of Catoul that would have deterred any other traveller however urgent the call: but Carathis enjoyed most whatever filled others with dread (...). [They] halted on the edge of an extensive marsh, from whence so noxious a vapour arose, as would have destroyed any animal but Alboufaki, who naturally inhaled these malignant fogs with delight. (89-90)

The passage includes a variety of traits, from the magical to the Gothic via the fantastic, that unveil the multiplicity of moulds in the novel. The end of the

paragraph further confirms Beckford's intrinsic irony, which does not allow the horror to be the only relevant aspect of narration.

2.6. Venetian Theatrical Inventions

The preponderance of all the authors cited so far concur to highlight that *Vathek* is a complex text made up of a diversity of sources building a series of imperceptible strata, which are not easily identifiable. I would argue that among the writers that marked Beckford's work, an author may have had a meaningful impact on his themes and his taste for the East as well as magical atmospheres. It is a literary figure, which Beckford probably discovered during his frequent journeys around the Continent, even though that particular author has not been mentioned in relation to his work so far. He was a fierce cultural antagonist of the playwrights Carlo Goldoni and Pietro Chiari (1712-1785), who had been dominating the theatrical scene in Venice during various decades of the eighteenth century. Count Carlo Gozzi (1720-1806) harshly criticized their works and accused them of having denaturalized Italy's theatrical tradition, the former for writing comedies depicting lower classes and the latter for an exaggerated sentimentalism. Gozzi was a Venetian-born intellectual, who progressively started writing plays for the theatre in order to restore the tradition that he felt was being neglected by contemporary playwrights. The dispute between Gozzi and Goldoni continued for some time and further enflamed the interest of the audiences, divided in two opposite parties, until the latter decided to abandon Venice for the rest of his life and work for the French monarchs instead. Gozzi's comedies, which were not initially meant for publication, had a peculiar structure. The story of the *Love of the Three Oranges*

(1761) is an interesting example of Gozzi's strange stylistic choice as the first act is more similar to a novel than a play. In fact, it is actually a long speech, providing stage directions for actors and actresses that were supposed to extemporize, following the playwright's extended instructions, which stand for the ancient *canovaccio* (a sort of a rough scenario). Players developed the *canovaccio* by improvising and creating the dialogues on stage during their performance, a technique dating back to the Renaissance. The operation Gozzi intended to carry out was to preserve the *Commedia dell'Arte* dramatic tradition.⁵⁰ He also wanted to maintain the role of masked characters, or *maschere*, that were representative of different regions, with their typical dialects. Moreover, they featured a range of moral attitudes, either positive or negative, expressed with a comical intent. However, in spite of his strong conservatism, Gozzi was also extremely innovative because he enriched his stories with cultural novelties. One is the introduction of folk stories in his plots that he took from ancient legends and from the collection of fairy tales written by Giambattista Basile (1566-1632), *The Tale of Tales* (1634-36).⁵¹ Therefore his plays introduced a different and fantastic dimension juxtaposed to the comedic. The second innovation was the insertion of the Oriental setting in imitation of *Les Mille et un Jour* (1710-1712), by the Orientalist François Pétis de la Croix (1653-1713), a European version of the *Arabian Nights*. The most famous of his theatrical fables inspired by de la Croix is *Turandot*, adapted for the theatre in 1762. The play was so successful that it was not only repeated for many years but also interested Goethe and Schiller (1759-1805), who both created adaptations of the work, equally appreciated as the original.⁵² *Turandot* is an

Oriental princess, whose incredible beauty is accompanied by a terrible cruelty. Also *La Donna Serpente* (1762), or *The Snake Woman*, was inspired by de la Croix.⁵³ The third new feature in Gozzi's plays was the invention of extremely elaborated sceneries, continually changing in order to impress the public with a wide assortment of special effects⁵⁴, which were meant to frighten and to attract with beautiful Eastern settings and sublime storms, accompanied by lightning and thunder. A further ingredient added by Gozzi was magic, constantly intermingling with reality. The effect of Gozzi's theatrical syncretism was quite similar to a form of *pastiche*, altogether amusing, ironic, exotic and tragic. Moreover, Gozzi could boast a series of cultural references to authors that he particularly cherished, such as the usual Ariosto, whose inventiveness he exploited for his dramatic material. Despite the success of the performances for decades to come, Gozzi's collection of *Theatrical Fables* (1772) were progressively shunned by Italian critics in favour of Goldoni⁵⁵, which determined the neglect of his creations, whose mingling of *genres* and context was considered a mark of low quality. It is likely that the young Beckford was inspired by the rich sceneries and the strange characters he could admire on the Venetian stage. I would posit that Gozzi's syncretism was a further cultural ingredient in Beckford's fusion of styles and sources.

2.7. Beckford and the Classics

Despite his golden seclusion⁵⁶, "Beckford received a brilliant education, and was widely learned in French, Latin, Greek, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, philosophy, law, literature and physics by the age of seventeen. His private piano teacher was Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart⁵⁷, - at least that is the legend, too

romantic to be discouraged” (Norton “The Fool of Fonthill”). As he had also decided to teach himself Arabic, he translated a group of manuscripts of the *Arabian Nights* between 1780 and 1783 that he intended to publish in 1787 (Alexander 100). Inexplicably, he did not persist⁵⁸ and only decided to print a tale called *Al Raoui* in 1799 (101), but it was published anonymously (Lonsdale), as the *novella* had strong homoerotic content that may have increased the prejudices on his reputation. After years of immersion in an imaginary Middle Eastern world, Beckford abandoned his projects on Oriental translations and production altogether.⁵⁹ For a number of years he cherished his passion for Orientalism, but I would argue that his interest in Eastern culture and literature was just one of many layers of knowledge in his extraordinary education, which did not replace his deeply rooted classical matrix. We may think that the passion for Oriental narratives was enhanced by Beckford’s extensive reading both in English and in French. My hypothesis is that, together with the motivations I expressed before, he felt more secure writing in French because the existing literary production in that language could offer him special terminologies and correct nomenclatures, which took more effort to find in his native language. The motivation for later deserting his Oriental passion and studies in Arabic was probably due to the great philological difficulties he may have found in his carrying out translations, which created problems for experts and scholars as well.⁶⁰

Beckford did not go on a Grand Tour as he actually went on many journeys to the Continent. He lived in different countries for large periods of time; he resided in Switzerland, Italy, France, Spain, and Portugal. In 1778

Beckford's intransigent mother interrupted his stay in Switzerland. During his stay abroad he had manifested mildly scandalous behaviours in Venice. As if following the script of some comedy of errors, Beckford had fallen for a young man who reciprocated his affection. However, the young aristocrat's sisters had desperately fallen in love with the charming young Englishman. To celebrate his adventures and his (male) object of desire, he wrote a composition most likely dedicated to his "crush". The text was a little masterpiece. What is interesting is that to create this fantasy (Alexander), he imitated Theocritus' ode in honour of *Hylas*. The Greek poet's Idylls had been partially translated by John Dryden and included in the Dryden-Tonson *Miscellanies* of 1684 and 1685. "Thomas Creech's complete translation appeared in 1684. (...) It was nearly eighty years before the next full-scale version appeared, by Francis Fawkes (1767), with another by Richard Polwhele following in 1786" (Penelope Wilson 184). Polwhele's version was appreciated by the *Monthly Review* in 1788 (lxxviii, 309), but Fawkes' translation was reprinted during the nineteenth century. The text by Fawkes adhered more closely to the original Theocritus and did not contain the sensual paraphrases used by Dryden. Both versions may have been known to Beckford. As Gillespie and Hopkins frequently underline, translations from classical authors were not only addressed to private readers, but also and mostly to tutors and learners for didactic reasons.

The *Hylas* that Theocritus had portrayed was the mythical figure of a young man who served as squire to the legendary Hercules. The dramatic development of his story shows some analogies with the Ovidian tale of Hermaphroditus and Salmacis in *The Metamorphoses*. Gone to a spring to find

water, Hylas is captured by the Naiads and hidden in the pond. After his disappearance, Hercules desperately looks for him but in vain. Beckford adapts Hylas' story to celebrate his love. His narrative skill is remarkable when he describes the young man observing the world from underneath the water:

He perceives the features of the Naiads, flushed with desire. Fain would he fly from their importunities (...). In the midst of his afflictions, the well-known voice of Hercules descended faintly through the waters. Thrice did the lovely captive reply; and thrice did the unavailing sound rise bubbling from below. The malicious Naiads sported with his perplexity, and as he sat dejected on a mossy fragment, danced wantonly around. And now the moon, rising to illuminate that world to which he never could return, (...) darted her lustre on the humid realms below. Shadows without number, reflected from the impending vegetation, glanced on the playful group and chequered their lucid forms. But Cynthia, disgusted by their wantonness, soon lost herself in clouds. Hylas now mourned in darkness. (Alexander 68)

This short passage is extremely rich for various reasons. The text is in fair copy (Alexander 175 Note 16) and was not published at the time of its composition. After fifty-six years, Beckford was still thinking about printing *Hylas* and including it in his work on Portugal, *Alcobaça and Batalha*, in 1834. We may think the emotional aspect was still very strong for the author but what is particularly interesting is that the text is a wonderful specimen of narrative technique for the various points of view moving, as if in a filmic shooting, from Hylas under the water to Hercules' desperate vision of the meadow nearby, then to the

indifferent gaze of the dancing Naiads. The description of the scene moves vertically to the sky where the moon seems to be observing the dramatic development from far above. Finally the point of observation suddenly descends and it is again with Hylas, surrounded by darkness, forever a captive in that liquid prison. Equally striking is the young man's despair and his frustrating attempt to emit sounds that are lost in the watery element, whereas the images of Hercules he can see are clear but unattainable.

The eighteen-year-old Beckford shows exquisite classical knowledge, a remarkable narrative technique and literary sensibility. He uses an example from the Greek Antiquity and from the poet Theocritus to reproduce his dismay for an impossible love. He also shows stylistic elegance blended with an impressive descriptive ability and they both reveal his extensive reading. The nocturnal vision of despair, which he creates in partial imitation of graveyard poetry, is imbued with classical imagery. Hercules, Diana, the Naiads are famous characters whereas Hylas is a relatively lesser known myth - a fact that may demonstrate the high intellectual level of the young Beckford and his mastery of Greek and Latin culture.

Beckford's extensive knowledge is shown in *Vathek* as well. Beneath his caustic irony and his exotic exaggerations, we can detect that the classical influences are strong. Many passages betray the mould of Antiquity under the Oriental surface. Nouronihar "loved her cousin, more than her own beautiful eyes" (65). The simile is taken from a poem by Catullus.⁶¹ The music that is constantly playing in Vathek's *Temple of Melody* recalls the atmosphere in Ovid's erotic elegies *Amores*. Ovid's work introduces eunuchs who are to protect

women from his own attempts to seduce them. Eunuchs are remarkably important in *Vathek* as they should protect the women of the seraglio and the emir's daughter, Nourinihar, but they fail.⁶² Short references to Ovid can be found in the image of tragic Philomel, transformed into a nightingale, whose melodious voice is compared to the eunuch Bababalouk's shrieks, creating a grotesque effect. Other themes in *Vathek* are taken from various authors such as Homer, Plutarch, Pliny and Lucian.⁶³ When Vathek's imperial procession ravages the beautiful flowers of some holy men, "the bees (...) thinking it their duty to revenge the insult offered to their masters, the santons, assembled so zealously to do it with good effect" (101). It may not be a coincidence that Virgil had dedicated his fourth Book of the *Georgics* to a sort of epic description of bees that he had humanized, and compared their laborious life to positive human activities.⁶⁴

However, Lucretius' influence seems to have played a major role. *On the Nature of Things* is Lucretius' only remaining work - a mysterious figure of Latin literature, living in the first century BC. His vast, complex masterpiece would influence the most important authors of Antiquity such as Horace, Virgil, Ovid and many others, not to mention the impact he had on the Renaissance (Valentina Prospero, Gillespie "Lucretius in the English Renaissance") and the Enlightenment (Erick Baker).⁶⁵ Baker explains that "to characterize Lucretius' impact on the age of the Enlightenment is a daunting task. Virtually every major figure of the period was in some way influenced by Lucretius, and many of the engagements represent a complex, often polemically charged dialogue with previous interpretations" (274). I would argue that Lucretius' encyclopaedic text

influenced Beckford, even though the ancient poet's name is not clearly mentioned.

2.8. Lucretius and Beckford

Although *Vathek* is a highly inventive Oriental tale, I would argue that it encases a variety of Lucretian references underneath a finely constructed Eastern surface. It might be useful to dedicate some words on Lucretius and his philosophy before proceeding with a comparative analysis between the Latin author and Beckford. It is difficult to say whether Lucretius was a poet describing philosophical theories or whether he was a philosopher using a beautiful and elegant form of poetry to convey his ideas. Scholars such Edward E. Sikes came to the conclusion that his nature is double, both philosophical and poetic. What is certain is that his text is a unique masterpiece of classical culture.⁶⁶ Lucretius may have been the victim of *damnatio memoriae* - a cruel Roman strategy that effected the elimination of any historical or social memory concerning a political enemy or a public figure in contrast with the institutions.⁶⁷ The only work that he left was *On the Nature of Things*, also translated as *Nature*. Lucretius was progressively forgotten and Lucretian manuscripts were lost, maybe not coincidentally, as the strong atheism he professed was considered pernicious. It was the great humanist Poggio Bracciolini, a researcher of ancient manuscripts, who found a manuscript of *De Rerum Natura* in 1417. This important discovery allowed scholars to study the great poet's philosophical theories directly from his source, rather than from secondary testimonies.

Even though the Lucretian poem was elaborate and difficult, his hypotheses led to extreme cultural changes (Stephen Greenblatt).⁶⁸ His

philosophical theories were expressed in beautiful and elegant verses, but Lucretius' complexity introduced doubts and uncertainties about his message. The intricacy of his theories was also due to the contradictions of some of his axioms. In fact, some of them seem so ambiguous that they have led scholars to the definition of a Lucretian philosophy, based on Epicureanism, which is developed in parallel with a latent anti-Lucretian ideology, founded on scepticism and pessimism, within the same text. An example of a contradictory statement is when Lucretius describes Gods' peaceful and eternal life in Book III, after repeating that nothing exists beyond physical matter and seeds, which he also calls atoms, an idea that he adapts from Anaxagoras' principles.⁶⁹

Paul Hammond argues that Lucretius was reputed to be "the epitome of unbelief". An anonymous angry reader writing a concise opinion on his copy of Dryden's *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681)⁷⁰ had accused the English poet of being "an Atheist exceeding Lucretius". Hammond explains that it was easy "to find Lucretius taken to exemplify the ultimate threat to Christian orthodoxy, or to find Epicureanism considered synonymous of libertinism". He also highlights that Dryden was often associated with the Latin poet as he was one of the most attentive British scholars of Epicurean philosophy.⁷¹

Epicureanism is actually a doctrine that sets as its aim moral serenity. The peacefulness that it targets was different from the purely hedonistic philosophical thoughts of late seventeenth- and eighteenth-century libertine ideals, which were less involved with peace of mind and soul than on carnal desire and fulfilment. However, despite the intrinsic differences between Epicureanism and the various currents of thoughts that originated from it,

especially libertine philosophy, Epicurean and Lucretian teachings were often interpreted as an exaltation of hedonism and an invitation to indulge in the senses. A further problem that was connected with Lucretius in particular was his negation of any metaphysical creative principle behind the existence of things: “Nature was not form’d by Powers Divine” (Lucretius III, 15; 1: 203). All elements in the world are made of atoms alternating with the void. Like the body, the mind and the soul are made of similar parts called atoms, or seeds, what Aristotle defines as homeomery: “but say, that common Seeds of many Things in various Order join’d, are mix’d in every Thing, and lie conceal’d” (I, 893-96; 1:75). Therefore the death of one’s body is inevitably followed by the death of one’s soul (III, 550-55 and 779-800; 1). According to Lucretius, religion is a human construction whence the constant fear of death is originated:⁷² “Indeed Mankind, in wretched Bondage held, lay grovelling on the ground, galled with the Yoke of what is called *Religion*: from the Sky this Tyrant shewed her Head, and with grim Looks hung over us poor Mortals” (I, 63-6; 1:11).⁷³

Translations of Lucretius were not as common as other more popular and less immoral (and easier to understand) authors of Antiquity. Some passages of the Lucretian masterpiece were translated by the Elizabethan Edmund Spenser (1552/53-1599), and a century later by Dryden during the Restoration. Spenser used Lucretius’s invocation to Venus in the *Fairie Queene* (1590). The prayer to the goddess can be found at the beginning of the original Latin text and is frequently repeated. Spenser introduced the supplication in the tenth stanza of the fourth Book of his masterpiece. Dryden used various passages that he adapted for a collection of poetical miscellanies called *Sylvae* (1685) - a

reminiscence of Statius' poetical masterpiece. Neither Spenser nor Dryden translated Lucretius integrally. John Evelyn was the first to translate the first two Books of the *Nature of Things* in the seventeenth century. The complete translation of Lucretius in heroic couplets was published anonymously by Thomas Creech in 1682, featuring the symbolic title of *Daphnis*.⁷⁴ A second edition was issued the following year in 1683 with the right title and the translator's name. Therefore Creech's version became the poet's most important translation in the eighteenth century and "would remain standard until the twentieth century" (Paul David 191). In addition to Creech's poetical version, an anonymous prose translation was published in 1743.

In his study on Lucretius and Wordsworth, Willard Spiegelman claimed that a comparative analysis between two authors can either be based "on tropes or topics: the first a rhetorical and formal, the second a thematic and ideological way of establishing connections among writers" (27).⁷⁵ I would argue that the quest for Lucretian aspects in Beckford may be based on both the stylistic and the thematic aspects of their works, but also the on philosophical affinities or oppositions, in order to find what Spiegelman calls "a meeting-place between two writers who have usually been thought to have little in common" (28).

Beckford started learning the Classics when he was still very young and read extensively (Alexander, Norton, Parreaux). He may have read either the Lucretian original or its translation. His brilliant mind and fluency in ancient languages may have helped him to understand the difficult Lucretian text and to be influenced by it. I would argue that Beckford introduces a series of allusions in his novel that refers to the complex Latin poet. Interestingly, one of the majestic

palaces built for Vathek is meant to give joy to the eyes but does not only contain exquisite works of art. In fact, one part of the marvellous construction “exhibited in their several classes the various gifts that Heaven had bestowed on our globe” (*Vathek* 2). Furthermore, Beckford uses the term “naturalist” (2) to describe this section of the palace, which is meant to reproduce all aspects of nature. I would posit that he is referring to the Greek Hesiod and, most of all, to Lucretius - the two authors that created their works in order to describe the works of nature in their amazing totality and promote a didactic celebration of the world’s mysteries and marvels.

One sentence at the very beginning of *Vathek* is particularly interesting as it shows a connection with the atheistic creed in Lucretius:

Being much addicted to women and the pleasures of the table, he sought by his affability, to produce agreeable companions; and he succeeded the better as his generosity was unbounded and his indulgence unrestrained: for he did not think (...) that it was necessary to make a hell of this world to enjoy paradise in the next. (*Vathek* 1)

The passage is only apparently simple. In fact, Beckford presents some ambiguous elements that Graham found extremely ironic in tone (“*Vathek* in English and French”). I would argue that they are contradictory and hermeneutically unclear, but show a connection with the Lucretian doctrine. From the very beginning of the story, the caliph is intent on satisfying his senses hedonistically. The first part of the passage is a confirmation of this tendency. It may be interesting to notice that Lucretius claims that the senses are the most important factors for a human being as they are the only instruments creatures

have to understand the world and they also give to every individual the possibility to be in connection with reality. The senses allow mankind to perceive the truth, which is merely physical: “And what can be more sure than are our Senses to us, by which we fully know Falsehood from Truth?” (Lucretius I, 699-700; 1:59).⁷⁶ Vathek orders the construction of palaces dedicated to the five senses and uses them to enjoy life and acquire unlimited knowledge.

We may argue that by showing “affability”, Vathek is following an Epicurean rule, which suggests harmony in human relationships among human beings to improve both personal and general conditions. The figure of the caliph and his actions initially seem to be linked to positivity. However, the admirable quality conveyed by “generosity” is accompanied by the ambiguous presence of “indulgence”, which may mean tolerance but also selfishness. Finally, the short passage culminates with the dichotomy between “paradise” and “hell”. The two terms introduce a pessimistic feeling and a sharp contrast as they represent the only two possible alternatives in Vathek’s existence. They are also a prolepsis of the protagonist’s destiny. It is interesting to notice that Lucretius explains that our lives are marred by the constant fear of death and the afterlife. He claims we should create a better world by using the means at our disposal to enjoy life to the full as it is the only one we have. Lucretius also posits that certain categories of men do not comply with the Epicurean suggestions of peace and tranquillity, but become violent and disruptive, desirous of ruining other people’s lives. Beckford is slightly modifying the Lucretian concept when he describes Vathek’s interest in avoiding hell in real life, therefore trying to create paradise on earth. However, the character’s ambiguity becomes immediately evident when we

discover a few pages later that Vathek is in fact making a hell of this world for all the people surrounding him. He has a boundless thirst for power, therefore he represents the Lucretian negative version of a human being. What is striking in the very short passage is that it appears to reproduce *in nuce* Vathek's future dramatic parable.

The third Book in *The Nature of Things* describes the excesses of cruel men that may be easily adapted to Vathek:

Covetousness and the blind Desire of Honours, which unhappy Men to exceed the Bounds of Right, and urge on the Partners and Assistants of their Crimes to strive Day and Night with the utmost Pains, to arrive at the Height of Wealth: These Plagues of Life are chiefly nourished by the Fear of Death; for Infamy, and Contempt, and sharp Want, seem far removed from a sweet and pure State of Life, and, as it were, hover about the Gates of Death; and therefore whilst Men, possessed by a false Fear, labour to avoid, and stand at the remotest distance from them, they add to their Heaps by Civil War, and, insatiable as they are, double their Riches, heaping one Murder upon another. They laugh with cruel Delight at the sad Funeral of a Brother, and hate and fear the Entertainments of their nearest Relations. (III, 59-72; 1: 207)

This long passage is particularly important for a series of reasons. We have come across one of those gloomy pessimistic descriptions in Lucretius that are in deep contrast with the idealised image of an Epicurean state of ataraxia, that is supposed to be distant from every form of suffering, either physical or moral. The passage features one of the dark visualisations in Lucretius' work, which

conveys his pessimism about the real essence of human existence. Not all men are ready to follow the dictum of a serene life because they feel envy and “covetousness”. While the fear of death transforms a lot of men into frightened and passive creatures, greed turns others into murderers and tormentors. These cruel men are described as “insatiable” and it is important to notice that this is the term Beckford often uses to define Vathek and his actions. Whether he feels an infinite thirst, or a huge hunger, or the desire for power or wisdom, the protagonist is “insatiable” in a way that recalls Lucretius’ “unhappy Men”. The following lines describe the latent and dangerous dissatisfaction felt by many:

And then to be always obliging an ungrateful Mind, to be ever pouring Favours upon it, and never satisfy it, which the Seasons of the Year, as they turn about, are always doing; they produce their fruits, and the whole variety of their Delights, and yet we are never filled with the Blessings of Life. (IV, 1016-20; 2:280)

The impossibility for men to reach full enjoyment is one of the limits of existence, which was also expressed by Petrarch in a famous line from one of his sonnets “Pace non trovo e non ho da far Guerra”, which means that he cannot find peace and he cannot have war either. The feeling Petrarch expresses is unrequited love, but it can be extended to other existential contexts. This same feeling can be applied to Vathek, whose life is characterized by a constant lack of satisfaction and an anxiety that cannot be eliminated, in spite of having unlimited riches and all the things he desires.

Like the cruel men in Lucretius’ poem, Vathek is convinced of his immortality. He is sure that he will be able to avoid “the gates of death”. However, Vathek’s unlimited yearning for riches, knowledge and control leads

him to the “gates of Eblis” where he has to experience excruciating pain for eternity. The philosophical pessimism expressed by Lucretius about mankind is mirrored in Vathek’s complex character. Whether consciously or unconsciously, Beckford follows Lucretius’ dichotomy in alternating positive beginnings and negative conclusions. He conveys this oscillation between the two contrasting poles by means of a rhetorical strategy, which can be found in a great number of the sentence structures he uses. It is not only what Graham defines as “irony” and it does not exclusively represent a tendency anticipating the Radcliffean bathos either. We may argue that Beckford’s stylistic technique reflects the “ominous preliminary” of a “sink[ing] with terror” (Vathek 111) that awaits the characters at the end of the story.

Before his fall, the caliph starts his life surrounded by pleasant diversions in the Lucretian sense. In fact, Lucretius explains that mankind’s physicality guides people to start the search for enjoyment, which is mental, emotional and physical:

Because the Spirits or Particles of Matter that maintain the Course, must be got together from all parts of the Body, and stirr’d thro’ every Limb, and fitly united, that they may readily follow the eager Desire of the Mind. You see then, the Beginning of Motion rises in the Heart, proceeds then by means of the Will, and is thence diffused thro’ every Limb, over the whole Body.

(II, 266-71; 1: 121)

However, Beckford’s protagonist becomes the slave of his desires. The paradise he can enjoy on earth actually turns into a hell for him and for everybody else. Vathek’s striving for absolute power, boundless dissipation and

unlimited knowledge, culminates in the dark Hall of the daemonic Eblis - a gloomy representation of eternal despair, where suffering never stops. The mysterious deities that seem to rule the magic place are indifferent to human suffering. When Eblis appears, Vathek and Nourinihar observe that "his person was that of a young man" and that he spoke "with a voice more mild than might be imagined" (111). Even if a "veil of melancholy" covers his eyes, the devilish divinity is calm and indifferent to Vathek and Nouronihar and to the rest of humanity. Intriguingly, Lucretius denies and at the same time does not deny the existence of Gods, but he makes it clear that they live peacefully in an unfathomable region: "The Deity of the Gods, their calm Abode appears, which neither Winds disturb, nor Clouds o'erflow with Showers, nor the white-falling snow, congealed by sharpest Frost, does spoil; but the unclouded Air surrounds them always, and smiles on them fully with diffused Light. Nature in every thing supplies their Wants; nothing at any Time destroys their Peace." (III, 18-24; 1: 203). The analogy between the divinities in Lucretius and in Beckford is their distant and mysterious location based on verticality. Lucretius' superior entities lie on a distant space above the world, far away from human beings. Eblis' abode, equally distant and impossible to trace, is situated in a mysterious abyss. Beckford's deities go towards an opposite direction as they hide in an immense chasm. To follow the divinity, Vathek and the other characters experience what S. Jung calls "a narrative of sublime fall" (304).

Even though the aesthetic of *Vathek* is connected to the mode of the Oriental tale, I would assert that its deeper structures are made of classical elements from Antiquity, both Greek and Roman. From the very first lines and in

spite of the pompous beginning of the novel, which recalls the context of the *Arabian Nights* and other exotic narratives, Beckford's text introduces a situation that is connected with hedonistic ideals:

He surpassed in magnificence all his predecessors. The palace of Alkoremi, which his father, Motassem, had erected on the hill of Pied Horses, and which commanded the whole city of Samarah, was, in his idea far too scanty: he added therefore, five wings, or rather other palaces, which he destined for the particular gratifications of each of the senses. (*Vathek* 1).

The passage introduces Vathek's aesthetic penchant for pure enjoyment to satisfy all five of his senses. He can indulge in beautiful forms, sweet perfumes, harmonious music, soft textures and luxurious meals at every moment of his life (2-4), and his contentment knows no limits amid "substantial pleasures" (14). Interestingly, the satisfaction of all senses is essential for Lucretius who intends to propagate respect for mankind's physical life and all the senses:

So plain it is that something is continually flowing off from All Bodies, and is scattered all about; there is no Intermission; the Seeds never cease to flow, because we still continue to feel, to see, to smell, and hear. Besides, since any Figure we feel with our Hands in the Dark, we know to be the same we before saw by Day, and in the clearest Light, the Touch and Sight must need be moved by the same cause. (IV, 225-34; 2: 25)

In accordance with the Lucretian creed, Vathek's life is dedicated to unrestrained Epicureanism and explicit eroticism from the very beginning. He seems to be a sincere adept of Lucretian teaching, which implies the satisfaction

of the senses and the development of pacific behaviour in order to let Venus, the goddess of love and divine beauty, rule over his life: "Notwithstanding the sensuality in which Vathek indulged, he experienced no abatement in the love of his people, who thought that a sovereign giving himself up to pleasure, was able to govern, as one who declared himself an enemy to it" (3). Here again we find the exaltation of the protagonist's sensuality, the atmosphere of an ancient fairy tale, and the importance of physical satisfaction, but the sentence ends with a flat statement which introduces irony and questions what has been previously told. Moreover, we discover that Vathek's subjects have changed their opinion as they "had been induced to expect that his reign would be long and happy" (1) at the very beginning of the story. The feeling of resignation has replaced people's initial exaltation for the young ruler. Once again, we can see that Beckford starts his sentence introducing an optimistic context, which is inevitably turned into a pessimistic or malicious conclusion, in the same way as Lucretius exalts nature, but also describes its terrible and frightening effects.

Lucretius and Beckford share other similarities. Learning plays an important role in both their works: "The Caliph (...) had studied so much for his amusement in the life-time of his father, as to acquire a great deal of knowledge, though not a sufficiency to satisfy himself; for he wished to know every thing" (3). In his mother's words, Vathek is also "certainly possessed of every important science" (9), but he desires to acquire more knowledge, so we may gather the impression that he is interested in unlimited intellectual discoveries.⁷⁷ Lucretius describes the "divine pleasure" (III, 28, 1: 203) he feels in the pursuits of the Epicurean philosophy and of wide learning. The poet feels what he defines as

horror in Latin, which is translated by the word “amazed” (III, 29, 1:203). It is the exalting sensation for the prodigious improvement of his knowledge. However, the ultimate wisdom that Lucretius needs is meant to improve the life of human beings whereas *Vathek* is only egoistically centred on himself.

Incapable of translating the mysterious changing words on the golden sabres that the hideous Giaour has given him⁷⁸, *Vathek* falls into a state of despair, which has a strange physical consequence:

Agitated with so much anxiety, *Vathek* entirely lost all firmness; a fever seized him, and his appetite failed. Instead of being one of the greatest eaters, he became as distinguished for drinking. So insatiable was the thirst which tormented him, that his mouth, like a funnel, was always open to receive the various liquors that might be poured into it, and especially cold water, which calmed him more than other. (12)

Even though the “insatiable thirst” *Vathek* feels is real, it represents a strong metaphor of his “voraciousness” (16), his “insatiable curiosity” (22), and his frustration for not obtaining the knowledge he desires. This knowledge is connected with the “power of darkness” (11). *Vathek* passes incessantly from one craving to the other. He embodies the “*sitis*” that Lucretius illustrates - the “thirst” that human beings constantly feel for their objects of desire:

The Pleasure we covet eagerly exceeds every thing we enjoyed before, as long as it is absent; but when we have it in possession, we long passionately for another, and the same Thirst of Life hangs upon us, still gaping for more. (III, 1093-97; 1: 287)

I would argue that a further connection uniting Beckford and Lucretius is a form of what I would define as linguistic anxiety. On more than one occasion, Lucretius claims that the theme he has absorbed from Epicurus is deep and important. However, it is difficult for him to find the correct words in Latin, in his opinion too simple a language to express his ideas: "I know it is hard to express in Latin verse the dark and mythic Notions of the Greek (for I have Things to say require new Words [*sic*]) because the Tongue is poor, the Subject new" (I, 136-39; 1:17). His awareness about his pioneering work on nature makes him reason on signifier and signified, and in meta-literary terms. Linguistically, he has to borrow some words from the rich and elegant Greek and insert them in his philosophical speech or to use similes, metaphors and euphemisms to convey difficult concepts. He equally shows that the differences of men and their position in the varied geographies of the world has created different sounds, words and idioms to express the same thing in different languages: "And then, what is there so very wonderful in This, that Men, to whom Nature has given a Voice and a Tongue, should, according to the various knowledge they had conceived of the great Variety of Things, distinguish each of them by a proper Name; when mute Cattle, and the several Kinds of wild Beasts, express their Passions by different Voices and Sounds, when their Fear, their Grief, or their Joys are strong upon them?" (V, 1055-60; 2: 201). At the same time, Lucretius shows a meta-literary conscience as he clearly highlights that his poetical effort can serve as a stepping stone in the development of literature and philosophy. On the other hand, Vathek's linguistic musing becomes evident when he is faced with the mysterious words carved on the Giaour's precious sabres.⁷⁹ No one can

decipher their hidden meaning⁸⁰ and this failure enrages the caliph. Vathek therefore offers a reward to the person who can translate the message, but he remains sceptical and claims that he will punish anyone who may be improvising or pretending. In fact, the caliph claims: "I have skill enough to distinguish whether one translates or invents" (Vathek 9). What happens later is even more significant. When an old, wise man finally manages to unveil the inscription, Vathek realizes that the words on the sabre magically change and their significance is consequently altered. He angrily dismisses the old man: "but it was not long before Vathek discovered abundant reason to regret his precipitation; for, though he could not decipher the characters himself, yet, by constantly poring upon them, he plainly perceived that they everyday changed; and, unfortunately, no other candidate offered to explain them" (12).

In a different context later on, Vathek is again furious at not being able to obtain a special "key" that the Giaour had promised him: "No language could express his rage and despair. He execrated the perfidy of the Indian; loaded him with the most infamous invectives; and stamped with his foot, as resolving to be heard" (27). Knowing Beckford's personal passion for languages ancient and modern, we may reasonably argue that the context is not only one of the many comic effects in the text, but it is also a meta-linguistic observation on the existence of an innumerable variety of lexicons. The mutating message on the golden sabre is a specimen of the myriad of existing languages and of the difficulty of knowing and understanding them. Also, the task of translating is an art that cannot be performed by everybody. Lucretius and Beckford share the same sensibility towards languages and the problem of sense, which has been

systematically tackled by linguists, semioticians and pragmatists starting from the end of the nineteenth century.⁸¹

It is in Book IV, probably the most problematic section of *The Nature of Things* for its explicit contents, that Lucretius describes the *blanda voluptas*, which Dryden translated as “the genial Feat of Love”. Translators had avoided Book IV for its graphic sensuality and straightforward descriptions of sexual intercourse.⁸² Lucretius illustrates the union of the bodies without using understatement or censorship, whereas sensual scenes are only hinted at in *Vathek*. Lucretius also provides a suggestion concerning the nourishment necessary to honour the acts ruled by Venus, rendered with a certain *pruderie* by the anonymous translator⁸³: “And the food we live upon is of no small importance; for the Seed increases through the limbs by some Meats, and it becomes watery and feeble by others”(II, 1260-72; 2: 105). I would not consider it a coincidence that one of the palaces dedicated to the five senses in the hill of Pied Horses contains “tables continually covered with the most exquisite dainties, which were supplied both by night and by day, according to their constant consumption; whilst the most delicious wines and the choicest cordials flowed forth from a hundred fountains⁸⁴ that were never exhausted” (*Vathek* 2). The great variety of food creates stimuli to *Vathek*’s sensuality.

Beckford united an outstanding intellectual curiosity with a marked provocative genius. He juxtaposed latent classical tones with the Oriental emphasis on the surface. The characters that dominate the first part of the story are *Vathek* and his astute and ruthless mother, *Carathis*, the quintessence of cruelty.⁸⁵ When the young caliph starts his journey in search of the mysterious

Eblis, he is separated from her but a new feminine figure enters the scene. The celestially beautiful Nourinihar conquers the young man's heart. Although she is already promised to the equally dazzling pre-adolescent Gulchenrouz, Vathek decides to seduce her. However, the figure of Gulchenrouz stands between them. He embodies an ambivalent presence for his feminine beauty that seems to exacerbate Vathek's feelings.⁸⁶ Even if Gulchenrouz does not interact with the Caliph, who openly loves his betrothed cousin, his languid ingenuity creates a sensual tension that Beckford emphasizes with insistence. Interestingly, a passage in Lucretius' Fourth Book is about falling in love. Here the poet makes a distinction between different forms of love. Cupid's arrows can create a passion for either a beautiful woman or a sweet pre-adolescent boy: "So he that is struck with the darts of *Venus* (whether some beauteous Boy, with Female Charms, the Arrow casts; or some more beauteous Maid, that shoots out Love from every Pore) tends to the Part that gave the Stroke; he is in Raptures to enjoy, to inject and to consummate; for the hot Desire to the Act foreshows the mighty Pleasure that attends it" (IV 1046-51; 2: 89). Although Beckford stresses Vathek's love for the beautiful girl, he ambiguously underlines the boy's superior beauty.

Indifferent to any form of punishment that may be carried out against her, ruthless Carathis embodies the villain of the story. The hideous sacrifices she is ready to perform, to obtain the devilish Giaour's favour, are inexorably useless: whether it is fifty innocent children, her zealous subjects, or whoever may be in her way to power, she is ready to carry out the most gruesome actions in view of her conquest of supreme magic. Her blind devotion to the dark forces proves to

be delusional. She is cold-blooded and ferocious, but equally hermeneutically inadequate.

In a moving passage, Lucretius warns against superstition and cruel rituals. He claims that the most horrendous of all is Iphigenia's sacrifice that her father Agamemnon is willing to accomplish before leaving for Troy:

But in these things I fear you will suspect you are learning impious
Rudiments of Reason, and entering a Road of Wickedness. So far
from this, reflect what sad flagitious Deeds religion has produced;
by her inspired the Grecian Chiefs, the First of Men at *Aulis*,
Diana's altar shamefully defiled with Iphigenia's blood; her Virgin
Hair a Fillet bound, which hung in equal length on either side of
her Face; she saw her Father, cover'd with Sorrow, stand before
the Altar; for pity to his Grief the butchering Priests concealed the
Knife; the City at the sight o'erflowed with tears; the Virgin, dumb
with Fear, fell low upon her knees on the hard Earth; in vain the
wretched Princess in Distress pleaded that she first gave the
honoured Name of Father to the King's but hurried off, and
dragged by wicked Hands, she trembling stood before the Altar:
Alas! Not as a Virgin, the solemn Forms being duly done, is drawn
with pleasing Force to Hymen's noble Rites, but a chaste Maid,
just ripe for nuptial Joy, falls a sad Victim by a Father's Hand, only
to beg a propitious gale for Grecian Ships: such scenes of Villainy
Religion could inspire! (I, 80-101; 1: 13)

Lucretius' passionate harangue is rhetorically meant both to convince his audience of the rightness of his thought and to highlight the excesses dictated by irrational belief. Most victims in *Vathek* are young and even though their

destruction is often narrated in an apparently mocking and superficial tone, the innermost cruelty and injustice of the action is dramatically evident. Carathis, and Vathek as well, show a distorted form of religiosity and superstition, which is similar to the one abhorred by Lucretius.

We may think that Vathek's gloomy ending is the metaphor of an Epicurean teaching gone wrong. What Lucretius claims in his fifth Book is intriguing because he coincidentally expresses in a few verses Beckford's protagonist's sad parable:

But Men strive to be renowned and powerful, that their Fortune
May stand firm upon a lasting Foundation, and the Wealthy
cannot fail to live at ease. All absurd! For those who labour to
reach the highest Honours, make a very unhappy Journey in the
End: Envy, like a Thunderbolt, strikes them from the Pinnacle of
their Glory, and tumbles them down with Scorn into an Abyss of
Misery. (V, 1120-26; 2: 205).

The "Abyss of Misery", which is described by Lucretius in the original Latin version as the "Tartara taetra" (2: 204) - the gloomy Tartarus - is represented by the Hall of Eblis, where "the ruins of an immense palace" with "gloomy watch-towers (...) of an architecture unknown [that] inspired emotions of terror" will forever enclose Vathek. The perennially unsatisfied caliph and his inexhaustible desire for what he cannot obtain anticipates the French schools of symbolism and existentialism.⁸⁷ I would like to cite again from Lucretius because his words strongly corroborate images that can be applied to Vathek and that will be found in twentieth-century existentialist novels about individuals' everlasting anguish:

One, tired at home, leaves his noble Seat, and goes often abroad but returns suddenly again; for he finds no Relief by shifting his Place. Another hurries and drives full-speed to his Country-house, as it was all o' fire, and he came to extinguish it; he no sooner sets his foot within the doors, but presently begins to yawn, or falls heavily to sleep, and strives to forget himself, or else posts as hard back, and returns to Town again. Thus he tries all ways to fly himself, but that Self it is, as it must be, out of his power to escape; he sticks close to him against his will, and sorely torments him. The restless Fool does not know the Cause of his Disease, if he thoroughly did, Every one would give up all other Pursuits, and apply chiefly to search into the Nature of Things.

(III, 1074-83; 1: 287)

The only way out for individuals is the will to study the physical world surrounding them and slowly discover the real essence of existence - an impossible task for Vathek who is prey to his unrelenting and obsessive proclivity.

Lucretius' rich narrations provide more topics that can be detected in *Vathek*. The description of the ruins at the entrance of Eblis or the destruction of Carathis' high tower may have been influenced by the Fifth Book (lines 306-315), which describes the collapse of temples because of the inevitable laws of nature. Lucretius stresses the beauty of nature but also its extreme violence. One of the images conveying major impact is the representation of a terrible sea storm at the beginning of the second Book. However, it is the sixth Book of the *Nature of Things*, almost completely dedicated to the most intense phenomena, that

conveys particularly dramatic portrayals of the disruptive character of nature. Interestingly, frightening atmospheric events take place in *Vathek* and their effects are both devastating and ominous: “before they could reach the ascent of the steepest rock, night overtook them, and a boisterous tempest arose. (...) The dark clouds that overcast the face of the sky deepened the horrors of this disastrous night” (46). The same strong wind and an even more formidable storm breaks out when Carathis starts her last journey towards Eblis. The most dramatic effects of nature accompany all the protagonists.

Intriguingly, both Beckford and Lucretius depict a particularly lugubrious environment, which instils deep pessimism.⁸⁸ Once the illusion of power has been destroyed, all characters in *Vathek* are suddenly taken by a terrible inner pain coming from their hearts that “took fire” (*Vathek* 119), a fire that will burn in perpetuity. The strange counterpart in Lucretius is the account of the plague in Athens: “The Head was first attack’d with furious Heats, and then the Eyes turn’d bloodshot and inflamed; the Jaws within sweated with black bloods; the Throat (the Passage of the Voice) was stopt by Ulcers; the Tongue (the Interpretation of the Mind) o’erflowed with Gore, and falter’d with the Disease, felt rough, and scarce could move” (VI, 1145-51; 2: 321). What is particularly interesting is that all of the terrible effects of the disease finally flow to the heart before provoking a horrible death. I would argue that the image of the heart as the centre of physical (Lucretius) and moral (Beckford) contamination is particularly strong and effective and further confirms the deep connection between the two authors and the extended influence of Lucretius on Beckford.

2.9. Dante and Italian Literature in *Vathek*

In his article “From Gothic Italy to Italy as Gothic Archive” (2006), Diego Saglia claims that Dante provided an immense repertoire of images for Gothic and Romanticism. *Vathek* is an interesting example of how Dante’s replicas permeated late eighteenth-century literature. Whereas Lewis’s protagonists in *The Monk* are haunted by demonic creatures who intend to destroy their lives, Beckford’s protagonists look for devilish creatures themselves and lose everything they have because of their own choices, not because they are induced by other entities to corrupt their true self. Beatrice’s words in the first Canto of Dante’s *Paradise* are revealing:

Then she, having sighed with pity,
bent her eyes on me with just that look
a mother casts on her delirious child,
and said: ‘All things created have an order
in themselves, and this begets the form
that lets the universe resemble God.
‘Here the higher creatures see the imprint
of the eternal Worth, the end
for which that pattern was itself set forth.
‘In that order, all natures have their bent
according to their different destinies,
whether nearer to their source or farther from it.
‘They move, therefore, toward different harbours
upon the vastness of the sea of being,
each imbued with instinct that impels it on its course.

‘This instinct carries fire toward the moon,

This is the moving force in mortal hearts (*Paradise*, I, 100-116)⁸⁹

What Beatrice says concerns both mankind’s free will and their destinies. All individuals choose the course of their lives and they can either practice virtue or escape from it; everybody is going “toward different harbours/ upon the vastness of the sea of being”. Vathek has chosen his way; he has followed what Dante calls the “instinct” and the inner “force” and has continued in the direction of his doom. Vathek’s parable ends in the subterranean majestic palace of Eblis that he has been desperately looking for, thinking it was the supreme *locus* of knowledge and power. The same idea is expressed by a bucolic “shepherd”, actually a “*genius*” in disguise, who tries to redeem Vathek by offering him an alternative virtuous life that the caliph proudly rejects (103).

Beckford’s style changes completely upon arrival at Eblis, and the Oriental lustre is abandoned in exchange for the darkest Gothic desolation. The pages are dominated by the pervading presence of Dante’s *Comedy*, and especially of the *Inferno*. Dante, like Horace, was one of the most widely translated poet in Britain.⁹⁰ Even though a complete version of the *Divine Comedy* was not carried out until the beginning of the nineteenth century, its complex symbolism and allegorical constructions were part of a shared cultural universe.⁹¹ In fact, Britain was the country where the dissemination of culture, through periodicals and the printing press, was higher than in other European nations at the time. Moreover, Italian language and literature were considered a further accomplishment of a complete education.

At the gates of the strange palace, whose architecture has never been seen before, the caliph and his companions could observe “the colossal forms of four creatures, composed of the leopard and the griffin, and though but of stone, inspired emotions of terror” (107). These animals have their flesh and blood counterparts in the *Comedy*. Dante had faced similar animals in the “dark wood” where he was lost at the beginning of his supernatural journey to Heaven. Three wild beasts threaten the poet and become dangerous obstacles for his progression. Charles Eliot Norton’s 1891 translation in prose describes the scene as follows: “And lo! Almost at the beginning of the steep a she-leopard, light and very nimble, which was covered with a spotted coat. And she did not move from before my face, nay, rather hindered so my road that to return I oftentimes had turned”. Then the poet meets “a lion” and finally “a she-wolf” (3), all of them fierce creatures that threaten and frighten him - Dante almost succumbs to horror.⁹² Curiously, Beckford uses Dante’s *escamotage* of the wild animals to describe the entrance to the unusual place that represents Vathek’s final destination. Moreover, Beckford unites images of the first and third Cantos. In fact, the animals that Vathek finds are at the stone portal with carved words that constantly mutate, thus reiterating the linguistic obsession in the text. The medieval poet claims, in Norton’s translation, that Dante saw “words of colour obscure (...) at the top of a gate”, and these words are “dire” to him (11).

We have mentioned before the presence of extreme verticality⁹³ in *Vathek*, which is accentuated by a number of terms (repeated many times) that connote it, such as: “ascendancy”, “chasm” (alternatively “black”, “dreadful”, and “accursed”), “gulph”, “precipice”, “mysterious recesses”, “valleys of

darkness”, “the centre of the earth”, and “gorges”. Robert Kiely dismissively claimed that the “conventions of *Vathek*” do not expose the past or provide new truths either, but “like all the highways or byways of Beckford’s world, they lead to the abyss” (59). In my view, this vertical feature is more complex and conveys more meanings than it was originally thought. The characters’ directions in *Vathek* are actually both upwards and downwards. The upwards movement can be found in the high tower that Carathis has ordered to build in order to carry out her divinations and mysterious acts. What is more, she performs her magical rites and her bloody sacrifices upon the highest part of it. The downwards movement is first found in the description of the chasm where the Giaour disappears and where the innocent children are later thrown by Vathek to be sacrificed to the monster. The most extraordinary example of movement towards the abyss is represented by the Hall of Eblis, whose corridors are dangerously “steep”. The entrance to Eblis creates a specular situation to Dante’s entrance in Hell. The medieval poet finds darkness and walks on almost perpendicular paths. Later, he can observe devilish creatures who punish sinners, doomed to eternal sufferings. His guide is the illuminated Latin poet Virgil, whereas the ambiguous Giaour becomes the leader for Vathek and his group. The Giaour turns out to be the devil’s emissary, and other creatures like him perambulate in the mysterious subterranean citadel. However, it is important to notice that Dante’s downward movement throughout the *inferno* is described in the first part of his story. Vathek’s progress takes him downwards at the very end of his strange parable. In fact, after climbing Carathis’ high majestic tower that almost touches the sky, the caliph moves downwards. He becomes itinerant and,

like Dante, thinks he has lost the way. When he finally finds the puzzling labyrinth of Eblis, he descends into its entrails to find “the region of wonders”, wrongly convinced he will obtain “all kinds of delights” (36). However, what he finds is a boundless misery. Dante moves along the circles of Hell and towards the centre of the earth where Lucifer’s seat is located. His wise companion Virgil, an example of moral superiority, constantly warns him against the dangers that are lurking in the devil’s hideous domain. Virgil awakens the poet’s empathy while the Giaour silences Vathek’s conscience and nourishes his greed. Virgil accompanies Dante as far as Purgatory then leaves him with the love of his life, the angelical Beatrice. She is meant to drive the poet to the highest empyrean spheres. Vathek’s first meeting with Nouronihar imitates the “Sweet New Style”, originally *Dolce Stil Novo*, the poetic manner of late medieval Italian poets exalting the angelical and purifying function of the beloved woman.⁹⁴ The perfume and the beauty of Nourinihar and her companions inebriate Vathek, who thinks that they are not creatures of this world but “peries⁹⁵ come down from the spheres”. He rejects his eunuch’s description of their juvenile insolence:

‘Contrive, rather, that my eyes may be fixed upon hers that I may respire her sweet breath as she bounds panting along this delightful wilds!’ on saying these words, Vathek extended his arms towards the hill, and directing his eyes, with an anxiety unknown to him before, endeavoured to keep within view the object that enthralled his soul: but her course was difficult to follow, as the flight of one of those beautiful blue butterflies of Cachemire, which are at once so volatile and rare. (63)

Nourinihar's effect may be compared to the healing appearance of the beloved woman in the poems by Guido Guinizelli⁹⁶ (1235-1276), Guido Cavalcanti (1255-1300) and Dante. Their ethereal beauty provokes a languid torment in the poets' senses. The caliph seems to be changing because of this fatal meeting, which may be considered as a new phase in his life of debauchery and indifference. However, instead of instilling peace in his life, the emir's daughter is mesmerized by Vathek's negative influence and she accompanies him in his journey; but their final destination cannot be paradise. Nourinihar is diametrically opposed to an angelical woman and to Dante's Beatrice. That her responsibility is high is confirmed at the gloomy entrance of the mysterious infernal palace when the magic stone figures reveal to Vathek that "in favour of [his] companion (...) Eblis pemiteth that the portal of this palace shall be opened" (108).

What Dante and Vathek have in common is that they are both sinners at the beginning of their strange adventures. However, Dante obtains the long searched-for purification. On the contrary, Vathek becomes more sinful and crimes accumulate, making redemption impossible. Their guides are antithetical; Virgil represents moral strength, whereas the Giaour has many cryptic meanings all connected with wrongdoing and misdeeds. Beautiful women accompany Dante and Vathek during the final part of their peregrinations. However, the women's alliances with the two heroes take different directions. Beatrice's name is symbolic because it means eternal beatitude. She is a celestial woman who can help Dante reach the highest part of Heaven to admire the apotheosis of divine creatures. She also sustains him in the process of purification from sin. Nourinihar's superior beauty and sweetness does not help Vathek. In fact, she is

progressively spoilt by Vathek's darkest sins and she is inexorably contaminated by his greed. Therefore she must share his eternal doom of suffering and his dramatic downfall, in a place that resembles Dante's *inferno*:

A place is there below, stretching as far from Beelzebub as his tomb extends, which not by sight is known, but by the sound of a rivulet that there descends along the hollow of a rock that it has gnawed with its course that winds and little falls. My Leader and I entered through that hidden way, to return to the bright world. And without care to have any repose, we mounted up, he first and I second, till through a round opening I saw of those beautiful things which heaven bears, and thence we came forth to see again the stars. (*Inferno*, Canto XXXIV, 127-139)

Norton's words render Dante's exit from Inferno, whose movement is upward and out of the recesses of the earth. The sense of relief and the beauty of the nocturnal sky are also found in *Vathek*, but the context is unlike Dante's:

The rock yawned, and disclosed within it a staircase of polished marble, that seemed to approach the abyss. Upon each stair were planted two large torches, like those Nouronihar had seen in her vision: the camphorated vapour of which ascended and gathered itself into a cloud under the hollow of the vault. This appearance, instead of terrifying, gave new courage to the daughter of Fakreddin. Scarcely deigning to bid adieu to the moon and the firmament; she abandoned without hesitation, the pure atmosphere, to plunge into these infernal exhalations.

(*Vathek* 108)

Totally absorbed by Vathek's greed, the once pure and beautiful Nourinihar becomes her lover's impatient guide and she voluntarily enters the evil palace, leading the group. The entrance to the mysterious subterranean vault is in contrast to Dante's final freedom from the cavern of horror. The poet breathes the pure air and admires the beauty of the stars, whereas Vathek's protagonists abandon the marvels of the "firmament"⁹⁷ and enclose themselves in the darkest devilish place. I would argue that Beckford did not only have the *Divine Comedy* perfectly in mind, but that he also intended to create a reversed story, however interspersed with Bakhtinian carnivalesque interludes, where the progress of corrupt individuals culminates in dark despair. A further echo can be found a few paragraphs later when Vathek and Nourinihar look at each other just like Dante and Beatrice in the final Canto 33 of Paradise: "As they descended, by the effulgence of the torches, they gazed on each other with mutual admiration; and both appeared so resplendent, that they already esteemed themselves spiritual intelligences" (108). I have also chosen the following passage in *Vathek* because it is the most evident symmetric echo of Dante's lines in the third Canto of the *Inferno*:

In the midst of this immense hall a vast multitude was incessantly passing; who severally kept their right hands on their hearts; without once regarding any thing around them. They had all, the livid paleness of death. Their eyes, deep sunk in their sockets, resembled those phosphoric meteors that glimmer by night, in places of interment. Some stalked slowly on; absorbed in profound reverie: some shrieking with agony, ran furiously about like tigers, wounded with poisoned arrows; whilst others, grinding

their teeth in rage, foamed along more frantic than the wildest manias. They all avoided each other, and, though surrounded by a multitude that no one could number, each wandered at random, unheedful of the rest, as if alone on a desert where no foot had trodden (110).

The scene of the immense multitude of sinners condemned to eternal suffering is among the most impressive and well known of his *Inferno*.⁹⁸ The punishment inflicted on the damned is the same for everybody, whereas Dante is much more articulate in his descriptions of chastisement. However, the sense of deep anguish and tremendous agony is rendered by Beckford vividly. It is possible to argue that Dante's words in the already mentioned third Canto (line 24-32 and 56-61) are a clear source for Beckford. Here follows a passage from Norton's translation:

Here sighs, laments and deep wailings were resounding through the starless air; wherefore at first I wept thereat. Strange tongues, horrible cries, words of woe, accents of anger, voices high and hoarse, and sounds of hands with them, were making a tumult which whirls forever in that air dark without change, like the sand when the whirlwind breathes (..) And I, who was going, saw a banner, that whirling ran so swiftly that it seemed to me to scorn all repose, and behind it came so long a train of folk, that I could never have believed death had undone so many.

(*Inferno* III, 11-13)

Although Dante's triadic⁹⁹ division of his work is not evident in Beckford's text, the story may be divided in three phases. Vathek's life in Samarah represents

paradise with all its extraordinary beauties. The infinite steps of the immense tower built by Carathis may lead to the Empyrean. The lake where Nournihar and Goulchenrouz have to expiate their sins, when they believe they are dead, and Vathek's difficult journey are both symbols of purgatory - an idea which is confirmed by the hero's first feeling of deep suffering for the loss of Nouronihar. Hell is then found in the final part in the Palace of Fire belonging to the demon Eblis. The variety of echoes connected with Dante in the final pages of the story casts a different light on the chameleonic narration, which becomes an inverted and grotesque divine comedy. I would argue that it is difficult to consider Beckford's novel as an Oriental tale exclusively. Rather, it is a philosophical exercise and a parade of knowledge, which the young author had accumulated and was eager to transmit.

2.10. Iconographies for Beckford

Beckford was an art lover and collector throughout his life. Cozens¹⁰⁰, his drawing-master, "was the most important influence on his youth" (Alexander 13), after his father. Cozens had developed a landscape drawing technique which, as John Sena explained, was based on "blots" (212). The painter expanded them until they became clearer images. "Beckford was thoroughly familiar with Cozens' theory and style of painting. Indeed, the artist probably employed the same principles and techniques in teaching Beckford to paint that the later suggested in a *New Method of Assisting the Invention in Drawing Original Compositions of Landscape* for all aspiring landscape painters to follow" (Sena 213). Cozens was instrumental in the development of the young boy's imagination. He introduced his son to him and they were travel companions for a

period during one of Beckford's several visits to the Continent. Cozens later introduced Beckford to Vernet, a French landscape painter that had lived in Italy for more than twenty years.¹⁰¹

The extraordinary *mise en scène* for his coming of age organized by de Louthenbourg (Alexander 78) was to remain impressed in his mind. The event was connected to a sense of absolute happiness that he could not feel any more for the rest of his life. We can find traces of de Louthenbourg's influence in one of Vathek's palaces. The place "named *The Delight for the Eye or The Support of Memory*, was an entire enchantment. (...) Here the well-managed perspective attracted the sight; there the magic of optics agreeably deceived" (*Vathek* 2). In a note written on 9 December 1838, more than fifty years later, Beckford still recalled the phantasmagorical event that he described as if it had happened a few days before.¹⁰² He still remembered the reproduction of a classical temple in an oak-grove that was lit "by a continuous glow of saffron-coloured flame". The atmosphere was magic but also strange because the "throng assembled before [the temple] looked dark and devilish by contrast" (Alexander 79-80). Beauty always seemed to have a gloomy counterpart for Beckford. A series of bonfires had been set up in the garden in remembrance of "Troy and Hector's funeral". The majestic event, to which he contributed with a series of suggestions, showed some aspects that we can find in his works. He included classical elements and he mixed them to Gothic imagery and Romantic sensibility, as it is possible to infer from the following words:

Delightful indeed were these romantic wanderings; delightful the straying about this little interior world of exclusive happiness,

surrounded by lovely Beings in all the freshness of their early bloom, so fitted to enjoy it. Here, nothing was dull or vapid; here, nothing resembled in the least the common forms and usages, the *train train* and routine of fashionable existence...even the uniform splendour of gilded roofs was partially obscured by the vapour of wood aloes, ascending in wreaths (...). I still feel warm and irradiated by the recollection of that strange and necromantic light which Louthenbourg had thrown over what absolutely appeared a realm of Fairy, or rather perhaps a Demon Temple deep beneath the earth, set apart for tremendous mysteries (81).

Beckford's fantasy had been unchained and then fed by de Louthebourg's elaborate phantasmagoria. A vast range of sources may have given life to the variety of images in *Vathek*. If we take into consideration the paintings and drawings he could admire in his own mansion, we may say that he had constant visual incentives for his inventiveness.¹⁰³ Some beautiful landscapes in *Vathek* are romantic, but their vagueness does not provide clues for analogies. The images could have been inspired by a medley of landscape artists' picturesque panoramas, from George Lambert (1700-1765) to R. Wilson, to Thomas Gainsborough (1727-1788), and Wright of Derby. The following passage features a placid landscape where Vathek and the caravan of all the people from Samarah have stopped to prepare for night:

The evening was serene, the air refreshing, the sky clear, and the flowers exhaled their fragrance. The beams of the declining sun, whose mild splendour reposed on the summit of the mountain, shed a glow of ruddy light over its green declivity, and the white

flocks sporting upon it. No sounds were heard save (...) the reeds
and voices of shepherds calling to each other... (25)

Beckford has slowed down the usual velocity of his narration to offer a quiet pastoral moment, full of classical tones. The description seems to be a reproduction of George Lambert's *Pastoral Scene* painted in 1744.¹⁰⁴ The author may have used Lambert's quiet natural setting with shepherds and white flocks as an interlude between the paroxysms of Vathek's agitated actions.

Wright of Derby was the unsurpassed British master of *chiaroscuro*, the technique that he had perfected during his stay in Rome. In 1784, he created one of his most famous masterpieces, *Dovedale by Moonlight*, a valley traversed by a river and surrounded by luxuriant woods suffused with an enchanting whitish gleam. Some undertakings in *Vathek* occur during the night that can be full of horror, "uncommonly dark", traversed by a "pestilential blast" when Carathis dominates the scene. On the contrary, it is full of languor and mildness when Vathek is gratifying his hedonist ego: "during these occurrences, the moon arose, the wind subsided, and the evening became (...) serene and inviting" (69). I would argue that the temporal proximity of the writing of *Vathek* and Wright of Derby's painting, together with Beckford's curious interest for every artistic production old and new might support the analogy between the novel's night scene and the canvas.¹⁰⁵

The progression of Vathek's strange parable, with his colourful seraglio, his eunuchs and all his servants begins as an optimistic enterprise full of merriment and expectation. The caliph goes on a mythical quest and the atmosphere is peaceful; devastating storms and strange events are still distant:

The Caliph's proposal was taken with the greatest delight and soon published through Samarah. (...). Women and children, and old men and young, every one placed himself as he chose. The cavalcade set forward (...). All was joy; nor did any one call to mind, what most of them had suffered, when they lately travelled the road they were now passing so gaily. (25)

Despite some distinctions, it is possible to find visual similarities between Beckford's apparently blissful journey and Watteau's rococo atmosphere in *Embarkation for Cythera* also known as *the Pilgrimage to the Isle of Cythera* (1717).¹⁰⁶ The Oriental images are merged with classical mythology and embellished by rococo imagination in Watteau's painting, whose real meaning still remains mysterious. Women and men join in a joyful expedition to the land of love, accompanied by playful cupids. It is not clear if they are leaving for their distant destination or getting ready to return to their place of origin. When asked, Watteau never clarified the message the painting was meant to transmit. In a similar way, Vathek's light-hearted subjects enthusiastically pursue his colourful wanderings. Children take part to the adventure as well, but despite all gaiety, they are going to find a tragic destiny.

A destiny that is shared by the caliph and his beautiful companion, Nouronihar. When they arrive at the mysterious palace, they find a terrifying ensemble:

A death-like stillness reigned over the mountain and through the air. The moon delated on a vast platform, the shades of the lofty columns which reached from the terrace almost to the clouds. (...) on the right rose the watch-towers, range before the ruins of an

immense palace, whose walls were embossed with various figures. (...) The rock yawned, and disclosed within it a staircase of polished marble, that seemed to approach the abyss (108).

Piranesi's fictitious architectural structures seem to dominate Beckford's elaboration of the context. It is the entrance to the frightening but majestic subterranean world where Vathek and Nouronihar are to be enclosed forever. Many etchings could have provided the inspiration, but two in particular seem to be linked to the scene. Made between the 1740s and the 1750s, they are *The Cornerstone of the same Gateway* and *Index to the First Volume*. The former corresponds to a special view of the Roman temple dedicated to the Egyptian Goddess Isis - a religious syncretism that was common in Ancient Rome. The latter is an unidentified intriguing etching.

In the end, when fatal punishment strikes the protagonists, "Their hearts took fire and they, at once, lost the most precious gift of heaven: - HOPE. These unhappy beings recoiled with looks of the most furious distraction (...) all testified their horror" (119). The despair is majestically summarized in the characters. Adam and Eve in Masaccio's painting: *the Expulsion from the Garden of Eden* (1425).

2.11. Some final ideas

Vathek contains a variety of influences, ideas and images that make it difficult to decipher the work in a final satisfactory way. Its dimensions are complex, its real meaning completely obscure. Its Oriental façade is majestic but actually hides many other essential components that belong to different cultural universes. Whereas the French Enlightenment leaves some traces, the Gothic

dominates the plot on various occasions releasing strange fears that are deeper than previous Gothic novels (Walpole, Reeve, Lee). Beckford constructs a strange narrative performance that is at the same time poetic and theatrical, based on extreme visual effects.

What I am arguing is the text's classical mould, which permeates every page despite its apparent exoticism. Many contexts reveal a classical stance that is recognisable as it imbues a great part of the novel. An outstanding historical work, published in the decade between the 1770s and the 1780s, is Edward Gibbon's (1737-1794) majestic *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*. The historian's encyclopaedic masterpiece was an exhaustive analysis of the genesis, development and end of the Roman Empire.¹⁰⁷ Gibbon also extended his study to important details on Asian and Arabian civilizations, which had been comprised in some regions of the Empire. *Vathek's* excesses are exaggerated and improbable, but his whims might revive notions of ancient Roman Emperors' folly, such as those of Caligula and Nero.

It may be plausible to think that Beckford had been an attentive and brilliant student. He had reversed all of his possible knowledge in *Vathek*, a text that is comparable to a literary and cultural blend of composite styles and ideas. A further credible comparison can be carried out with a classical text that was extremely inventive and at the same time profoundly critical of its contemporary corrupted society. *Vathek's* extravagant protagonist could also be considered as the double of the shamefully rich Trimalchio who indulges in every pleasure. Trimalchio is one of the most hideous characters in Petronius Arbiter's *Satyricon*.¹⁰⁸ The work, whose entire text was never retrieved and that is

narrated in the form of a novel, had been translated by William Burnaby (1673-1706) in 1694, but could be found in multiple versions. It was a scandalous text, but also a precious analysis of the customs of the times, especially of the lower classes, which were not generally depicted when Petronius was active. One of the possible meanings is that opulence and wealth cannot save Trimalchio. Neither can Vathek use his unlimited riches to save himself from his horrible doom.

¹ Beckford rejected the help of his tutor, John Lettice, considering him inadequate for the task (Alexander, Parreaux, Lonsdale) and employed Samuel Henley, who also compiled a series of extensive and cultivated annotations to the text, highly appreciated by literary reviewers for their superior intellectual level. The long notes were later reduced by Beckford himself, and adapted to the reading public for the 1816 edition, (which is the one I have used for this research, published in the Oxford World Classics series, edited by Roger Lonsdale). Beckford constantly monitored the translation to which he made various changes. Henley apparently published the work without Beckford's permission and he is supposed to have forced the author to accelerate the publication of the French version, as a consequence.

² The difficulty of determining the exact date of writing and the actual language of the first edition was increased by a series of manuscripts with variations and corrections, which could not be attributed or dated with certainty.

³ Parreaux justifies Beckford's choice in relation to the high stylistic level reached by French translators (Chardin, D'Herbelot, Antoinette Galland, Pétis de la Croix, Guelette) in the domain of Oriental tales. It was easier for him to imitate their style and leaving to his own translators the task of elaborating the right English version (*William Beckford* 137).

⁴ Alexander, Parreaux, Norton and others confirm that William Beckford was essentially bilingual after his various journeys to Switzerland and France.

⁵ Although Parreaux, Guy Chapman and various authors thought Beckford's novel did not receive any critical attention, Lonsdale highlights that the reception was almost unanimously favourable in consideration of several positive reviews published in *A New Review* (June and July 1786, ix, 410-412, x, 33-39), *The Critical Review* (July 1786 lxiii), *The European Magazine* (August 1786 x, 102-104), *The Monthly Review* (May 1787 lxxvi, 450). The only contrasting opinion had been voiced by the *The English Review* (September 1786 viii, 180-184) that expressed doubts about the work's real moral meaning.

⁶ For example, note 1 referring to page 1 contains a detailed explanation of the political value of the word "caliph" whereas note 2 about page 4 is dedicated to the term "genius", and all its variants in Latin and Greek.

⁷ Dale Townshend includes it in his *Orders of Gothic*. In particular, he highlights psychoanalytical "parental perversion", and analyses Vathek's enjoyment of "*ars erotica*" and pleasure following Foucault's theories (211-212).

⁸ Some critics were contradictory in their opinions such as Montague Summers. He included *Vathek* in his *Gothic Bibliography* but totally excluded the novel from the *Gothic Quest*.

⁹ According to Folsom, the surreal text was apparently written as a parody of Walpole's *Anecdotes of Painting in England*, a sort of encyclopaedia of art history. What Beckford satirized was "the biographical method of interpretation, in general" (58).

¹⁰ In fact, Walpole's pedigree, so to speak, was actually very similar to that of Beckford and Lewis. The legendary halo surrounding Walpole is based more on imagination than real facts. In her *Art of Darkness*, Williams argues that the study of the Gothic "has been shaped by its own powerful myth of origins, the oft-told tale of Horace Walpole, Father and Great Original, a tale which is itself a full-fledged Gothic narrative". Considering how the genesis of *The Castle of Otranto* is generally described in mythical terms, repeating Walpole's well-known story of the sudden inspiration coming from a strange dream and the fast composition of the book that followed, she further explains that "few books about the Gothic fail to repeat this wonderfully appropriate story. It provides an aristocratic and vaguely 'supernatural' lineage worthy of any Gothic hero. At the same time, it is a fundamentally bourgeois fantasy; the Walpoles had not been born aristocrats, but elevated to the peerage within living memory, just as Strawberry Hill was made, not born a Gothic 'castle'. Like those lords of great estates whose holdings contained no authentic ruins, Walpole had to build his own Gothic pile" (*Art of Darkness* 8-9).

¹¹ The status of *nouveau riche* together with his dubious reputation accompanied Beckford throughout his life. His first petition for peerage was rejected by the King because it was made just before the rumour of his ambiguous *liaison* with the young aristocrat William Courtenay (1768-1836) became public. Beckford was nineteen when he had met the eleven-year-old Courtenay. They continued seeing each other for four years until the situation came to light and the rumour began circulating insistently. The scandal exploded when they were reported to be together in a room in Beckford's house, and when their secret correspondence became public. The real facts are controversial. Parreaux and others interpret the whole series of events as a conspiracy to ruin Beckford's political career. Whatever the real situation was, he never received the peerage and he was scornfully excluded from British society both in England and abroad. Moreover, being in contact with Beckford meant being excluded from society as well.

¹² The lack of clarity of contemporary reports and the general reluctance to speak about the events that changed the course of Beckford's life do not permit us to properly understand what really happened between Beckford and Courtenay. Apparently, their mutual feeling was strong from the very beginning. After their meeting, Beckford was cautiously sent to Europe with his tutor Lettice as a *chaperon* by his severe mother. However, Beckford's behaviour was even more frivolous on the Continent than at home. Therefore he was talked into settling down. Once back in England, he got married and it was when his wife was pregnant with their first daughter that he was found locked in a room with the younger William in his mansion during a reception in 1784. Professor Larry Wolff, in his engaging article on a scandalous case taking place in Venice the following year, 1785, interestingly explains how the parameters to judge a sexual crime at the time were completely different from our twentieth- and twenty-first-centuries perspectives. A number of crimes did not have the legal specification they have today. Wolff explains that the "thick case file", a rich elderly man employing an eight-year-old and making her sleep in his bed, "offers to the historian of the ancient *regime* one of the most comprehensive explorations of the phenomenon that we today call 'sexual abuse' or 'paedophilia' – for which there were no such clarifying clinical or legal designations in the world of the 1780s" (420). Further, he specifies that "the eighteenth century possessed neither the legal framework nor the conceptual vocabulary to recognize (...) sexual abuse". Also Lorenzo Da Ponte, Mozart's librettist, had risked being involved in tragic consequences for having a *liaison* with a married woman, therefore he had escaped to Vienna to avoid conviction (424). Moreover, Wolff argues that the libertinism exalted by the supposed paedophile was not considered different from the libertinism expressed by a paragon of seduction, such as Giacomo Casanova (1725-1798). As Wolff posits, Casanova's erotic memoirs

and De Sade's pornographic stories, which came to light in the 1780s, highlight the connection between libertinism and the will to violate innocence. However different, Beckford's case is probably difficult to determine from the point of view of our cultural universe. Gayle Rubin's statement (developing Michel Foucault's intuitions in *History of Sexuality*) can help to understand the level of contemporary potential misinterpretations: "In spite of many continuities with ancestral forms, modern sexual arrangements have a distinctive character which sets them apart from pre-existing systems". The great social changes brought about by "industrialization" and "urbanization" in Western Europe and the United States in the nineteenth century modified a variety of aspects of human life and "it also gave rise to a new sexual system characterized by distinct types of sexual persons, populations, stratification, and political conflict" (679).

¹³ Notwithstanding the plantations in Jamaica and the revenues from his father's political activities, Matthew Lewis often expressed worries concerning his financial condition, which mostly arose from the separation of his parents and his mother's constant requests for money. Once he could use his inheritance freely, he stopped working and writing altogether, as he could live affluently, thus showing that his economic preoccupations were groundless.

¹⁴ Lewis Melville (299-300) reported a piece of conversation between Beckford and Cyrus Redding. Beckford confided that he thought Walpole hated him because some rumours had been spread to increase alacrity between the two: "Mischief-making people annoyed him by saying that I intended to buy up all his nic-nackery when he was dead. Some things I might have wished to possess—a good deal I would not have taken as a gift. The place was a miserable child's box—a species of gothic mousetrap—a reflection of Walpole's littleness... My having his playthings he could not tolerate, even in idea, so he bequeathed them beyond my reach."

¹⁵ The use of a specific Italian term such as "*villeggiatura*" that can be translated as "family summer holiday", does not only denote a good knowledge of the language but is also a very clear clue about the linguistic and cultural corpus Beckford had acquired during his stays in Italy and in Venice, in particular. The Venetian playwright Goldoni was one of the most important authors of plays. A great connoisseur of European literature and drama and a great admirer of Molière, he had carried out a sort of revolution in Italian theatre. He had progressively transformed the *Commedia dell'Arte* (based on regional masked characters, use of Italian dialects, and improvisation) and the old tradition of Italian farce, as I explain later. He created comedies based on realism and on a new vision of society influenced by the Enlightenment where aristocrats are funnily corrupted, middle classes are self-aggrandizing, and plebeians are the real wise characters, able to provide a happy ending to problematic plots. The trilogy of the *Villeggiatura*, describing bourgeois families before, during and after the summer holidays, was one of the many famous theatrical works by Goldoni, regularly running in theatres even after Goldoni had finally moved away from Venice to work at the service of the French King by the 1770s. I would argue that if Beckford uses this word it is because he knew the Italian playwright's works that he could have seen during his stays in Venice.

¹⁶ The analogies between William Beckford and Oscar Wilde (1854-1900) have been noticed by more than one critic. They are similar for their eclectic production, their unusual literary experiments and for their dangerous love affairs that marked their reputation for ever. The only difference is that Beckford's ruin started earlier, at twenty-four (coincidentally when he was already married), but he was not sent to prison. It may be argued that a further analogy can be found if we compare Beckford and John Wilmot, 2nd Earl of Rochester (1647-1680), for their great culture, their beautiful looks, their libertine attitude, and their difficult relationship with their religiously strict mothers.

¹⁷ *Rasselas* (1759) by S. Johnson is an example of Orientalism, which is used for didactic and moralizing purposes. Some critics made comparisons between Beckford's *Vathek* and S. Johnson's *Rasselas*. James Ridley's *Tales of the Genii* was published in 1764 and is supposed to have influenced Coleridge's *Kubla Kahn* (1816). Mack (475) also mentions a list of British authors that were inspired by Eastern Literature: Alexander Pope (1688-1744), Joseph Addison (1672-

1719), Richard Steele (1672-1729), Sterne, Oliver Goldsmith (1728-1774), Maria Edgeworth (1688-1749). A short Oriental text was written by Addison and published in *The Spectator* in 1711 ("The Vision of Mirzah").

¹⁸ He did not discriminate between Arabia, India, Persia. He was infatuated with all things Oriental. He was also superficially attracted by Chinese and Japanese cultural examples but his interest faded in favour of the Middle East.

¹⁹ Speaking about Oriental culture involves a problematic generalization. The distinction Ballaster provides, based on Ahmad Gunny's *Images of Islam in Eighteenth Century Writings* (1996), is particularly interesting because she highlights the fields of specializations developed by the Oriental scholars between the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries and how their works were of fundamental importance in the development of the Oriental fashion in Europe: "Scholarship in Middle Eastern languages, literatures, and theology, after the brief flowering of English scholarship under Edward Pockoke in the 1670s, was also largely mediated in Britain through France. Barthélemy d'Herbelot (1625-1695) was a professor of Oriental Languages at the Collège de France from 1692. He never travelled to the Orient, but was responsible for the major source of Oriental knowledge in the eighteenth century, the *Bibliothèque Orientale* of 1697, based on the bibliographical dictionary of an Ottoman historian Hajjī Khalīfa (1608-1657). D'Herbelot was in turn a major influence for the leading European scholars of Islam and the Middle East of the period. Antoine Galland (1646-1715), appointed Chair of Arabic at the Collège Royale in 1703, spent much of the 1670s and 1680s in Istanbul collecting manuscripts on the instructions of Colbert to add to the *Bibliothèque du Roi*: Adrien Reland (1676-1718), a Dutch Professor of Oriental languages at the university of Utrecht from 1701 to 1718, was a leading advocate of the Persian language and explicator of Shi'ite Islam (his tract "Of the Mahometan Religion" published in England in 1712 was a key text in the Protestant rehabilitation of Islam as a means of attacking the Roman Church); Simon Ockley (1678-1720), the leading English scholar of the early eighteenth century in Oriental language and history, was appointed on the Chair of Arabic at Cambridge University in 1711, and was the author of a history of the Saracens which detailed the lives and military successes of the first three Caliphs of Islam" (77-78). Galland disseminated knowledge on the Turkish culture, Reland and D'Herbelot were the experts of Persia while Ockley divulged the Arabian culture. Ballaster also posits that even enthusiasts for Oriental wisdom such as Addison, S. Johnson, and Goldsmith could "draw their cited sources from the compendious vernacular histories of informants (...), or from popular sequences" (78). The majority of the authors that Ballaster mentioned influenced both Beckford and his translator Henley that frequently cited them in his notes to *Vathek*.

²⁰ Mack highlights that Antoine Galland had created a "free adaptation" that he had "deliberately pruned" so as to avoid accusations of lewdness (471). An Orientalist, Galland had extensively travelled through the Levant where he also lived for some years, on diplomatic and cultural missions for the French King (Louis XIV). He acquired knowledge of Arabic and Persian and was an expert in Turkish things, as mentioned in the previous note.

²¹ Mack continues, clarifying that "The nature and appeal of the book lies as much in its ability to transform itself according to the needs and desires of its individual audiences - be they readers or listeners - as in its unique synthesis of the eternal and the ephemeral, the magical and the mundane"(470). Beckford may have intended to reproduce the mutable prerogatives of Oriental tales.

²² Therefore, it is possible to argue that Beckford was not actually a pioneer of the Oriental tale, but he was using existing material to give a special touch of exoticism to his novel.

²³ Hamilton was an Irishman of Scottish descent living on the Continent. He wrote "far-fetched and ludicrous" parodies of Oriental tales in a "witty, ironic tone" (Lonsdale xxvii). Stories such as *Le Belier*, *Fleur d'Epine*, *Les Quatres Facardins* were meant for private entertainment and were published posthumously. "Hamilton presents his Dinarzade [Sherazade's sister] in a comic

rewriting of the [Arabian] tales which he [privately] circulated in the first decades of the eighteenth century among the aristocratic French lady readers, so eagerly consuming Antoine Galland's newly published volumes. Hamilton's Dinarzade speaks up directly against the despotic, paranoid, and self-obsessed Sultan Schariar, using her tale to undermine the myth of his potency, which her sister's deferential stories seek to enhance" (Ros Ballaster 2-3).

²⁴ Even though some passages in *Vathek* may show analogies with Voltaire's Oriental tales, I would argue that the similarity is superficial. In particular, the motivation behind the story has a strong philosophical and didactic impulse in Voltaire, whereas Beckford's final objective is connected to experimentation and aesthetics. He also shows a taste for *pastiche*, as I later explain in the section on Matthew Lewis' *The Monk*.

²⁵ Zadig is a prosperous young man with wide knowledge, who starts a secret journey to escape from Babylon. He has to undergo many an ordeal before understanding the meaning of life and the importance of providence. Whereas Zadig's adventures make him wiser, *Vathek*'s experiences make him more obnoxious and lead him to damnation. I would argue that their similarity is limited to the exotic setting.

²⁶ "He diverted himself, however, with the multitude of calenders, santons, and dervishes, who were continually coming and going; but especially with the bramins, faquirs, and other enthusiasts (...) Wherever the Caliph directed his course, objects of pity were sure to swarm round him; the blind, the purblind, smarts without noses, damsels without ears, each to extol the munificence of Fakreddin, who, as well as his attendant grey-beards, dealt about, gratis, plasters and cataplasms to all that applied. At noon, a superb corps of cripples made its appearance" (60-61). The different kinds of religious representatives are amply described in Henley and Beckford's explanatory notes. The enumeration mixed to the description of funny performances create a parodic effect, in Bakhtin's words, which can be equally found in Voltaire's narratives. When it comes to religions, their strange rites and the various superstitions flowering from them, they unchain the French philosopher's irony. Voltaire's criticism of religious exaltation can be found in *Candide* (1759), whose extreme consequences are in Chapter 6 when religious authorities organize an *auto-da-fe* in order to calm God's fury and an earthquake. The entire scene is similar to a huge spectacle, analogous to the emir's religious fair in *Vathek*. However, Voltaire's scene is meant to arouse indignation whereas Beckford is simply looking for colourful narrative effects.

²⁷ Two further texts by Voltaire are *Bababec et les Fakirs* (1750), and *Travels of Scaramentado* (1756), identified by Lonsdale (*Vathek* 145 note 5 and 133 note 3). Lonsdale and other critics consider that the sound of the name Bababec may have influenced the eunuch's name Bababalouk.

²⁸ Apparently everything is dominated by "pleasure", "mirth" and beauty until the protagonist finds a gloomy cavern entering the seventh door. The old man walking with the protagonist warns the young man against the alluring aspects of physical enjoyment and suggests following the paths of wisdom, instead. The poem ends with "the youth [who] o'er walks of jasper takes his flight /And bound and blazes in eternal light" (William Jones 49). We could suppose that the young man's experience surrounded by a strange dreamlike atmosphere could represent a voyage in the afterlife. The apotheosis in the end could make us think of paradise as all elements are inundated with light, just as Dante is surrounded by the strongest divine light at the end of his supernatural journey.

²⁹ "Genii" or "viziers" are examples of the imported terms that entered the English language. Henley employs many explanatory notes to provide details about the new words and their etymology.

³⁰ I list some of the most relevant ones for the genesis of *Vathek*, who were openly cited by Henley and Beckford: George Sale, who translated the Koran in 1734 (Beckford and Henley used its 1764 edition); Alexander Guiga translated Elias Habeshi's *Present State of the Ottoman Empire*

in 1784, while John Richardson wrote *A Dissertation on the Languages, Literature, and Manners of the Eastern Nations* in 1777 and in 1778, with an expanded edition.

³¹ Here follows a limited number of cultural sources cited by Henley (and Beckford) in order to show the exquisite intellectualism the novel is apparently based on, which also conveys a certain level of self-conceit. Intriguingly, Beckford and Henley excluded some titles, which were later identified by critics and scholars: William Marsden, *The History of Sumatra* (1783); John Cook, *Voyages and Travels through the Russian Empire, Tartary, and Part of the Kingdom of Persia* (1770); Richard Pockcoke, *A Description of the East* (1743-5); Jean François de Lacroix, *Anecdotes Arabes* (1771); Joseph Pitt, *A true and faithful Account of the Religions and Manners of the Mohametans* (1704), Frederick Hasselquist, *Voyages and Travels in the Levant* (1757); Simon Ockley, *The History of the Saracens* (1757); Jean de Thévenot, *Travels* (1687).

³² Back in 1964, Folsom acutely wrote that “*Vathek* is still read” but he was not in agreement with “literary interpretation of its meaning [...] usually concerned primarily with discovering its author’s manifold neuroses” (53). More recently, Jung remarks the excess of forms of “psycho-biography” (302) he equally disapproves of.

³³ Gill compares David Hume’s concept and the French philosopher historian and linguist Jacques Derrida’s definition of experience. Derrida (1930-2004) is among the major theorists of Post-modernism. The empiricism professed by D. Hume (1711-1776) also derived from a series of Lucretian arguments concerning the acquisition of knowledge through the senses.

³⁴ The beautiful Nouronihar should be Louisa Beckford, his cousin’s wife, with whom he had a sentimental liaison. The young and mysterious Gulchenrouz should be the representation of the extremely young but sexually perturbing Courtenay, for whom Beckford lost his reputation. The figure of the cruel Carathis, *Vathek*’s unmerciful parent, is supposed to be a representation of Lady Maria Hamilton, his strict and repressive mother.

³⁵ One clarifying example is illustrated by the children episode. The fake pageant organized by *Vathek* to honour the most beautiful children in his reign ends in the mass killing of the celebrating young creatures who, after being lured into a dangerous place, are thrown into a deep obscure chasm where the demonic Giaour is awaiting to devour them. In spite of the potentially gory effect, the tone changes immediately towards the grotesque, and all pathos is lost.

³⁶ Thomson’s works were inspired by Virgil’s *Georgics*, and reproduced the Latin poet’s love for nature. Jung underscored the importance of the visual impact in the poet that was highly praised by his contemporaries (23 “Visual Interpretations”). Jung also highlights that “The poetry of Thomas Gray (1716-1771), Edward Young (1683-1765), James Macpherson (1736-1796), and Robert Burns (1759-1796), among many others, was frequently interpreted visually, and it is the visual or painterly adaptation of these poems that frequently enhanced, sustained, and prolonged their, and their authors’, reputation in the nineteenth century” (24).

³⁷ Fulford explains that “Johnson did not only use eighteenth-century conceptions of sublimity in language as a standard by which to criticize Shakespearian disorder. He also used the vocabulary of landscape-description as a strategy, a means of persuading his readers by emotion as well as reason of the rightness of his views when he could not triumph by logic (...) Like Johnson, the picturesque writers wished to uphold the power of the landed gentleman, like Cowper, they wished to recall him to his traditional paternalist role. For Gilpin, as for Johnson, it was in his confrontation with an older rural culture that his own rhetorical self-assertion became associated with local speech. And that speech resisted codification by the traditional rules of taste and eluded subordination to the social and political judgements of the gentlemanly classes” (110-115).

³⁸ Payne Knight had published a strange book in the same year as *Vathek* was published. *A Discourse on the Worship of Priapus* (1786) was a very scandalous text, which exalted a pantheistic vision of the world, where plants and animals were also part of the immanent divine.

³⁹ As far as colours in *Vathek* are concerned, a large number of descriptions in the text contain or are connotative of the colour red. I have selected a limited number of examples: “inflamed with anger” (14), “coral lips” (15), “streams of blood (21), “oranges and pomegranates” and flames of the deepest red” (51), “flakes of fire” (52), “fiery red” (98), “the globe of fire” (69), “inflamed with love” (71), “palace of fire” (84), “worship of fire” (88), “the rites of fire” (100), “the abominable palace of fire” (103). “impetuosity of his blood” (106), “long curtains brocaded with crimson” (110), “flames and torments” (118), “eternal fire” in their “hearts” (119).

⁴⁰ “The eye is not the only organ of sensation. Sounds have a great power in these as in most other passions. I do not mean words, because words do not affect simply by their sounds, but by means altogether different. Excessive loudness alone is sufficient to overpower the soul, to suspend its action, and to fill it with terror. The noise of vast cataracts, raging storms, thunder, or artillery, awakes a great and awful sensation in the mind, though we can observe no nicety or artifice in those sorts of music” (Burke 151). Burke’s essay, published in 1757, was so popular that a ninth edition had been issued in 1782, thus renovating the interest for the sublime, originally theorized by the classical author of the first century, Longinus. The fragments of a treatise on the effects of good writing had been attributed to the Greek master of rhetoric living in the first century AD, popularized by Nicolas Boileau⁴⁰ (1636-1711), whose 1674 translation gave the text great visibility and importance in criticism, after centuries of oblivion. Two editions of Longinus’ work, which was highly praised by Pope, and translated in English by William Smith (1711-1787), were published in 1739 and in 1743 respectively, therefore keeping the interest alive on poetic strategies to produce effective descriptions. The playwright and critic John Dennis (1658-1734) had preconized the importance of the sublime with writings full of emphasis that were ridiculed by Addison, Pope, and S. Johnson.

⁴¹ “Proposing a threefold division between divine, natural and supernatural magic, Diderot accepted that divine revelations were a gift from God, while “natural magic” had been replaced by science. Only supernatural magic truly deserves the label of “magic”, and it is upon this category that Diderot heaped much of his contempt: “this black magic that always takes offense that leads to pride, ignorance and the rejection of science”. Magic is equated with fraud and defined as “the bedfellow of superstition” (Henderson 23).

⁴² He exploited the rudiments of chemistry and pharmacy that he had learnt to become a healer. He was also interested in alchemy, occult science, and magic rites which he perfected during his umpteen journeys all over Europe, from Russia to Portugal, from Poland to Malta. He created a freemason rite dedicated to Egypt and founded many lodges in Europe, which attracted large numbers of adepts. Some claim that he was “being bankrolled for political purposes by wealthy members of one of the German secret societies, probably the Illuminati” (Fleming 226).

⁴³ The strange event is extensively described in the chapter dedicated to Ann Radcliffe’s *Romance of the Forest*.

⁴⁴ The historian Thomas Carlyle (1795-1881), who had dedicated an essay to Cagliostro, could not conceive how the Count’s contemporaries might have been so gullible, especially considering his bad looks, his lack of education and the clear improbability of his claims. Cagliostro was hated by some of his contemporaries, among whom Giacomo Casanova absolutely abhorred him. Notwithstanding his unclear activities, Cagliostro enjoyed immense popularity. Mozart created the character of Sarastro in *The Magic Flute* (1791) with Cagliostro in mind. The records of his trial and his interrogations were published by Giovanni Barbieri who had access to Inquisition documents. Cagliostro’s memoirs were translated in English in 1791.

⁴⁵ A poet, a historian, a prose-writer, a philosopher and a politician living between the thirteenth and the fourteenth centuries, Dante is reputed to be the greatest poet of Italian literature and one of the most important in the world. His studies cover many important subjects. He was a linguist *ante litteram*. He contributed to the promotion of the Italian vernacular that he selected from the Florentine language by carrying out a philological absorption of valid terms in other vernaculars of the peninsula. He borrowed from Latin and other languages. His masterpiece is the *Divine Comedy*, completed in 1321, an allegorical poetic narrative of a supernatural journey in the three *loci* of the Christian after-world, *Hell*, *Purgatory* and *Paradise*. Some of his characterizations of the netherworld were absorbed by the early Gothic novels. Ariosto lived at the turn of the century between Italian Quattrocento and Renaissance. He published three revised editions of his masterpiece *Orlando Furioso* between 1516 and 1532, adapting his work to the needs brought about by the emerging printing press. It is a chivalric romance developed from the medieval popular literary cycle about Charlemagne and his paladins, which he mingled with fantastic episodes of *King Arthur* sagas. His work was to influence a great number of authors during the Renaissance and afterwards. Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered* (1581) was meant to be a religious epic set during the first Crusade. Although it reflected the anguish and gloom provoked by the Counterreformation of the Roman Church, the chivalric text contains many amorous interludes in the manner of Ariosto, whereas battles and sieges are influenced by Homer and Virgil's epic narrations. The text ideally concludes the Renaissance period and anticipates Baroque themes.

⁴⁶ Pulci and Boiardo were men of the *Quattrocento*, the fifteenth century, which coincided with the flourishing of *Signorie*, a form of power managed by neo-aristocratic mercantile families, replacing the popular governments of previous medieval city-states. They sustained the development of humanism and the arts. Both authors had developed episodes from the legend of Charlemagne. Pulci created a mock-heroic epic, *Morgante*, whose main character is a giant at the service of the French king. Boiardo exploited Charlemagne's war against the Saracens, but he highlighted the romantic side of the story, introducing Angelica as the beautiful and sensual heroine, in contrast with traditional medieval female representation, for whom every paladin (and Saracen, too) will fall.

⁴⁷ Interestingly, even though it was a period when the Romantic creed had progressively replaced the rational faith of the previous century, a clear-cut distinction of the past epochs was not yet conceivable. I further analyse this issue in the next chapter.

⁴⁸ Nourinihar is beautiful as well as capricious and rebellious. Adapting Ballaster's definition of Shuey-pin-sing, we might say that "Like Galland's Scheherazade and Richardson's *Clarissa* (1748), the heroine is the indulged daughter of a powerful man" ("Narrative Transmigrations" 88).

⁴⁹ Marsilio Ficino (1433-1499), protégé at the Medici court, was a humanist, a translator from Greek and a neo-platonic philosopher. His most famous work is the *Theologia Platonica* (1482), which exalts the immortality of the soul. He practiced various disciplines and was also interested in astrology and magic.

⁵⁰ The Webster dictionary defines this kind of dramatic production as "Italian comedy of the 16th to the 18th centuries improvised from standardized situations and stock characters".

⁵¹ Written in the Neapolitan dialect, the stories of *Lu Cunto de li Cunti* were considered a minor form of literature and were overlooked for centuries until systematic translations into Italian and various languages together with critical studies revealed their value in the twentieth century. The collection includes early versions of *Cinderella*, *Rapunzel*, and *Sleeping Beauty*, later used by French writers, such as Charles Perrault, and the Brothers Grimm.

⁵² Whereas Gozzi's star was slowly forgotten in favour of Goldoni, starting from the nineteenth century on, the success of *Turandot* continued independently of its author. Many versions and remakes were made, one of the most famous being Giacomo Puccini's (1858-1924) opera in

three acts, which was produced in 1926 for the first time. Apparently, Puccini was inspired by Schiller's 1802's version.

⁵³ Gozzi set the fable in the land of distant Caucasia where King Farruscad and the fairy Cherestani have to face many ordeals for their love. *La Donna Serpente* was adapted by Richard Wagner (1813-1883) in his first complete opera that he entitled *Die Feen (The Fairies)*, written in 1833. While adding "a more Orpheus-like rescue scene", Wagner found "value in Gozzi's handling of the prince's final trial, with its attention to fearful feelings mingled with sexual desire" (Katherine Syer 38).

⁵⁴ The family Galli Bibiena of Arezzo, in Tuscany, but active in Bologna, had started the tradition of scenic effects and infinite perspectives for the theatre with the use of *trompe l'oeil* and special effects in the seventeenth century. They were the forerunners of the Baroque apparatus and the taste for theatrical illusions, which developed in the following centuries.

⁵⁵ Goldoni has been compared to the Latin Terence (195/185?-159 BC) in a collective research on "Natural and Artificial on the Stage" edited by the scholar Carmelo Alberti. Studies on Gozzi are generally scarce, or non-existent.

⁵⁶ Beckford's strict Methodist mother decided not to send him to school or university as he was of a very weak constitution. Also, she was worried that he might not be able to cope with large groups of people. That choice may have had negative repercussions on the development of his personality and have been the cause of his difficulties in social interaction in more mature years, as some biographies underline.

⁵⁷ Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart (1756-1791) travelled all over Europe with his father and sister to give concerts between 1763 and 1766. He also went to England and may have briefly met Beckford whose rich and ambitious father was ready to spend any sum for the education of his only legitimate son. Even though the age difference between the two boys was of only four years, Mozart was already a musician, being particularly precocious.

⁵⁸ Mack confirms that Beckford "was competent in Arabic" (474). However, Robert Irwin suggests that most of Beckford's "knowledge seems to have come via Galland" (252).

⁵⁹ His further endeavours resulted in the publication of four episodes for *Vathek*, which are sometimes attached to the main novel in certain editions.

⁶⁰ Interpreting Oriental texts could not be limited to Arabic exclusively. Knowing the Orient also meant having linguistic and cultural knowledge of Sanskrit, Persian, Turkish and other Eastern languages, which required steady philological research, possibly also in the countries where they were spoken. The architectural interests at home and his tours in Europe almost certainly prevented Beckford from continuing his adolescent passion. It may also be argued that his lack of university studies, together with his erratic tastes, did not allow him to develop a systematic methodology of research, in spite of his formidable intelligence and extensive readings.

⁶¹ It is poem III, line 5, (taken from Catullus' collection of poetic works) dedicated to the "Death of Lesbia's Sparrow" and her despair: "than her very eyes, oh! dearer to her far" (29). Nourinihar's "languishing looks" can be found in the beautiful and attractive "negri occhi" in Ariosto's Canto VII, stanza xii, lines 2-3 (Lonsdale 148, note 4).

⁶² Classical references to Ovid are inevitable for the pervasiveness of the Latin poet. In fact, his influences can be found in Radcliffe and Lewis as well. The theme of the metamorphosis cannot be found in *Vathek*, unless we consider the fatal change of the characters when they are doomed in Hell. They are transfigured into desperate anonymous beings, one the same as the other. One remark made by Marina Wagner may induce us to place the Ovidian matrix in the context of *Vathek* "Ovid's poem is filled with erotic, violent and even lurid stories evoked with consummate

sophistication. (...) Ovid's moral sense does not direct the reader; indeed he often seems remarkably indifferent to responsibilities and judgement; didacticism is utterly alien to him. However, through his profoundly ironical fatalism, he frequently appears to be enjoying unmasking divine cruelty, caprices, and revenges, and he engages mordantly with human capacities for wickedness, for rape, incest, murder" (19). Certain Ovidian features may be equally applied to Beckford, in particular his irony in describing the "caprices" and the excesses of his characters.

⁶³ In some cases, the sources are clearly mentioned by Henley and Beckford in the explanatory notes. In general, they provide cultivated allusions, which reinforce the idea of the author's classical polish, such as ancient rituals for the dead (Homer, Lucian), or the description natural elements and customs (Pliny).

⁶⁴ Virgil's Book IV is apparently simple. Like the previous Books, it is an exaltation of the tranquil life in the country. However, it also features more important themes. It is both a scientific and an entomological observation of the behavior of bees that produce an important product, honey, which has medical properties. Virgil creates a sort of epos of the tiny creatures, which is also a philosophical meditation on the contrasting dimensions in the universe (big versus small). The text has also been interpreted as a metaphor of human activities and political organizations, in particular, it may be associated with monarchic political systems.

⁶⁵ Lucretius' presence is incredibly pervasive in the works of the time even though it is not easy to find his name clearly mentioned. Baker identifies three major currents of thought in the eighteenth century, which were a consequence of Lucretian ideas. One is the exaltation of science posited by John Locke (1632-1704), Voltaire and The Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713), who include the idea of Providence as a complementary element. Pierre Bayle (1647-1706), D. Hume and Diderot do not actually agree with deism and tend towards more or less strong forms of naturalist atheism based on Lucretius. Burke, Rousseau, Goethe and Kant absorb the idea of progress but also include the religious value, which is absent in Lucretius.

⁶⁶ Lucretius's life was an enigma. Interesting details about him can be found in Cicero's correspondence. Some scholars claim that Cicero was also the editor of Lucretius's book, which was called *De Rerum Natura* in the original Latin version. The great Latin orator and senator may have published the masterpiece after Lucretius' untimely death, perhaps caused by suicide.⁶⁶ However, this hypothesis seems to be antithetical to Cicero's Stoic attitude that may have been deeply in contrast with Lucretius' Epicurean doctrine, despite the respect he supposedly felt for the great poet and philosopher. Many contrasting stories circulated on Lucretius' life and his figure was surrounded by a halo of mystery that could never be dissipated due to the lack of information and of documents.

⁶⁷ The Epicureanism and the atheism that Lucretius expressed in his work may have been inauspicious for the Stoic Latin *intelligentsia* and the Roman political establishment. He lived in a period of turbulent and perturbing political changes, at the heart of which one of the most frightful events took place - the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 BC that was preceded by a series of shocking and devastating wars. In a sense, William Beckford was the victim of a forced oblivion as well, imposed by contemporary society because of his scandalous behaviour. The mark on his reputation was never really erased during his life.

⁶⁸ The masterpiece is divided into six books that develop three major themes. The first theme contains observations on physics, based on atomism and Epicurus' teachings. The second theme features a form of anthropology with the theorization of the characteristics of mankind. Here Lucretius explains the essence of body, mind and soul. The last part is about the majestic and frightening manifestations of nature and the puzzling essence of the universe. Lucretius starts by showing categories and oppositions such as being and nothingness; matter and void; body, mind, and soul; time, space and infinity. He then proceeds with a description and explanation of all forms of physical phenomena.

⁶⁹ He changed the mechanical atomistic theory by adding the notion of “swerve”, the Latin *clinamen* - a soft movement which allows atoms to change their direction. Thanks to the notion of swerve he could therefore deny determinism and introduce the idea of free will - a positive element whose counterpart is the blind cruelty of nature that can violently hit mankind in any moment.

⁷⁰ The political satire, written during the fictitious conspiracy of the Popish Plot (1678-1681), was aimed at idealizing James Scott, First Duke of Monmouth (1648-1685), the eldest illegitimate son of Charles II and a Protestant sympathizer, who could have inherited the throne in place of Charles's brother James, a dangerously fervent Catholic. Dryden compared him to the Biblical David and described Charles as a loving father.

⁷¹ Lucretius extensively explained Epicurus' doctrine in his masterpiece in order to demonstrate that it was the best philosophical way to improve human existence, and the life of all creatures on earth. However, Epicurean lines of reasoning were often misinterpreted due to the focus on the term 'pleasure' that is present in both Epicurean and Lucretian argumentations with relative frequency. Dryden “was particularly interested in distinguishing true Epicurean philosophy from the distorted libertine version of it, which was current in Restoration literature” (Hammond 158). Epicurus' exaltation of pleasure mostly meant the tranquillity of the mind, and the concept was reiterated in the six books of the *Nature of Things*, written around 55 BC. It is true that the Greek philosopher and the Latin poet, in particular, generally stressed the predominance and the importance of sensuous gratification in human life. To Lucretius in particular, physical satisfaction has different meanings as it can represent the joy of poetry, the happiness of friendship, and the sweetness of landscape, rather than sexual acts. Peace of mind and tranquillity in the Epicurean sense are brought about by the absence of pain and fear - two feelings that unjustly dominate the lives of human beings and turn them into unhappy creatures.

⁷² *The Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right*, written by Karl Marx (1818-1883) in 1843 but never published during his lifetime, introduced the concept of religion as an artificial construction by men. Marx analysed Hegel's philosophy and developed some of Ludwig Andreas Feuerbach's (1804-1872) intuitions. Marx adapted Lucretius' ideas on religion to his political and economic philosophy.

⁷³ Following Epicurus' wise teaching, Lucretius intended to make superstition and the fear of death disappear. He dedicates his significant words to his friend Memmius and to all human beings.

⁷⁴ The choice of the title *Daphnis* is not a coincidence: the author abstained from using Lucretius' name and avoid the negative halo surrounding the Latin author. At the same time, the hint could be understood by those boasting classical knowledge. In fact, one character in Virgil's *Bucolics* bears this name. The eclogue is about a sad event and many critics have identified the protagonist with Lucretius, a poet that Virgil wanted to honour.

⁷⁵ The relationship between Wordsworth and Lucretius, who influenced many of his poems, has been studied by various scholars, such as Spiegelman and Martin Priestman among others. After the discovery of a manuscript at the end of the 1990s containing Wordsworth's translation of a Latin work, the poet's interaction with classical authors is much more complex than was usually believed: “The shadowy status of this translation in the Wordsworth corpus raises questions about the reception of both Juvenal and Wordsworth. [...] If today we call Wordsworth a 'Romantic', a member of a school we oppose to that of his 'neoclassical' predecessors, one reason is that, perhaps partly following his own lead, we have been willing to play down his links to classical Greek and Roman poets (the latter being the stronger). No effort was needed to overlook his work on Juvenal: its demotion in his lifetime and its obscurity ever since is an orientation of the record which in later life he himself wished when he asked for the manuscripts to be destroyed” (Gillespie 124).

⁷⁶ Lucretius' words and his rhetorical question "Quid nobis certius ispis sensibus esse potest, qui vera ac falsa notemus?" indicate his desire to employ the senses as the real and only source of truth in the physical world.

⁷⁷ Vathek's unlimited desire for knowledge and power has been interpreted as a Faustian characteristic. The Giaour would supposedly represent Mephistopheles tempting a weak man to obtain his soul. However, the constant ironic stance and the comic situations experienced by Vathek make it difficult to compare two characters that are completely different.

⁷⁸ Roberts and Robertson consider the mutating and incomprehensible words on the sabre as emblematic of Vathek's "textual uncertainty" (199).

⁷⁹ Roberts and Robertson mentions the "Babel-like tower" (203) built by Vathek as the metaphor of the confusion of languages and, consequently, of meanings - an aspect that is constantly lurking and prevents the characters from fully understanding each other. I would posit that important issues are both the incapability of mutual understanding and the powerlessness at deciphering the messages from superior entities. Carathis' reading of the stars, Nouronihar's visionary communication with the "dives", the divinities in the grotto, Vathek's misinterpretation of the Giaour, together with the changing words of the sabres and the portal of Hell, are a constant meta-linguistic idea on the problems of incommunicability.

⁸⁰ The protagonist's inability to decipher meanings or his strange capacity for misunderstanding messages are connected to a form of unattainable disambiguation of real significance, which has been conjectured by Professor Eco in his studies on the problematic but indispensable nature of translation. (See: *Experiences in Translation*, and *Mouse or Rat?*).

⁸¹ Eco has analysed the problematic of translations in several essays. The difficulties (impossibility) of transposing a language into another, in a way felt by Vathek, can be found in the philosopher's texts on translation, mentioned above.

⁸² Dryden was one of the few who tried to transpose Lucretius's passage literally. His words are used by the anonymous translator of the prose version, who naively admits "I can translate no further. Dryden, in his *Miscellanies*, goes on in full vigour, and keeps up to the original" (IV, 2: 105).

⁸³ The original words by Lucretius: "Atque in eo refert quo victu vita colatur namque aliis rebus conrescunt semina membris atque aliis extendantur tabentque vicissim" (Lucretio 256-58).

⁸⁴ The sentence does not only describe the protagonist's "sensuality" (*Vathek* 3) but also shows how Beckford uses a form of poetic, and elegant prose. In this particular case the alliteration of the letter 'f' is a rhetorical device to underline the eternal flowing of the delicious libation.

⁸⁵ One significant example is when she makes preparation for Vathek's expedition: "During these preparations, Carathis, who never lost sight of her great object, which was to obtain favour with the power of darkness, made select parties of the fairest and most delicate ladies of the city: but in the midst of their gaiety, she contrived to introduce vipers amongst them, and to break pots of scorpions under the table. They all bit to wonder, and Carathis would have left her friends to die, were it not that, to fill up the time, she now and then amused herself in curing their wounds, with an excellent anodyne of her own invention: for the good Princess abhorred being indolent" (38-9). The passage is an almost surreal illustration of the woman's wickedness, described in a light style interspersed with irony, tending to the grotesque.

⁸⁶ When Beckford's authorship of *Vathek* became known, many commentaries were characterized by gossip. Esther Lynch-Piozzi made some remarks in her journal on 3 January 1791 about "Mr. Beckford's *favourite propensity*, [which] is all along visible I think; particularly in the

luscious Descriptions given of Gulchenrouz" (Lonsdale xxi). In spite of the passing of years and even though there is no sexual interaction whatsoever between the caliph and other male characters in the text, the prurient readers' morbid attention was always concentrated on that particular aspect, connected with the author's sexuality.

⁸⁷ It might be interesting to mention the French symbolist Charles Baudelaire (1821-1867). One of his poems in the notorious collection - *Flowers of Evil* (*Les Fleurs du Mal* 1857) - is entitled "Sed non satiata", which is a Latin phrase meaning "unsatisfied" (literal meaning: unsatisfied thirst). Vathek's frustration is often compared to thirst, both physical and psychological. Parreaux is among the number of critics who claimed that Beckford played an important role in French literature thanks to the French version of his masterpiece. His evocative force was remarkable for French surrealists as well.

⁸⁸ The last part of Lewis' novel is also mournful and violent.

⁸⁹ This extract is taken from the *Divine Comedy*. The translation is available on the University of Princeton website (*Princeton Dante Project*), which is one of most comprehensive and reliable collections of critical, philological and iconographic resources about Dante Alighieri and his works on the web.

⁹⁰ In a section of the *Encyclopaedia of Literary Translation*, Edoardo Crisafulli traces the story of Dante's *Divine Comedy* translations (I use the author's spelling): "A multitude of translators and poets, from Chaucer to Seamus Heaney, have tried their hand at rendering single episodes or entire canticles of the *Comedy* (e.g. Count Ugolino, XXXII-XXXIII), which have always aroused interest in the English literary tradition. There are a great number of rewritings of Dante's poem into English perhaps more than into any other language, (cf. De Sua, 1964): Dante is, together with Horace, the most widely translated poet (...) BOYD's (1802) (British) is the first complete translation of the *Comedy*. His version (in pentameters arranged in six-line stanzas rhyming aabccb) is clearly a part of the 18th century modernizing and naturalizing tradition of translating (cf. Dryden and Pope): Boyd takes great liberties in rewriting the original and makes no effort to reproduce Dante's tercets. However, his imagination has a Romantic vein, since he grasps the significance of the redemption of man in the *Comedy* and stresses Dante's "sublime genius" (critics in the late 18th and early 19th century found in Dante elements of a Barbaric age such as 'terror', 'pathos' and 'sublimity')" (340). Crisafulli also explains that Boyd's free version was based on Dante's literary borrowings in Shakespeare, Spenser, Milton, Dryden, and Pope. Beckford may have read Boyd's translation, published after his first editions of *Vathek*, therefore that version could not have a strong impact on the text. Beckford knew Italian and had spent various months in Italy before writing his Oriental novel. He may have read some of the cantos translated by Dryden and Pope, or by Thomas Gray. It is most likely that he read the poem in the original version thanks to his fluency in the language. Interestingly, the Italian text of the *Inferno* was published in Paris in 1787, a further evidence of the popularity of the *Comedy*'s original version and the cultural knowledge of Italian in Europe during the eighteenth century.

⁹¹ Technically speaking, the translations of Dante's poetic work have been divided into three different categories: "From Holmes comes the idea of the three main types of verse form: mimetic (*terza rima* in English), analogical (a form, such as blank verse, having the same cultural significance in the target tradition as the original had in the source tradition), the organic (a form, such as free verse, that has no relationship with the original one). From Holmes also: the distinction between different large-scale policies: (a) exoticizing (e.g. retaining a *terza rima* and source language syntax) vs. naturalizing (e.g. blank verse and target language syntax) (b) historicizing (e.g. use of archaisms) vs. modernizing (e.g. use of modern English). From Venuti the seminal notion of transparency (the dominant canon in the English tradition of translating), i.e. a policy domesticating the foreign elements and achieving easy readability and fluency, as opposed to a foreignizing policy (synonymous with Holmes's exorcizing policy)" (Crisafulli 340). The canonical edition of the *Divina Commedia* was established only in 1921, nowadays replaced by

the Italian scholar Giulio Petrocchi's version in the 1960s. Therefore, earlier translators were forced to work on more than one original text.

⁹² The symbolic animals in the first Canto are a "lonza", a "leone", and a "lion" - in the original Italian version, respectively translated as "leopard", "lion" and "she-wolf" in the Princeton modern version. The meaning of the dangerous and frightening creatures in Dante is rather mysterious. The beasts have been variously deciphered. Philosophical, religious, political and metaphorical explanations have been given. However, Dante's meaning is obscure on purpose. Although less profound and much more limited in scope, Beckford's *Vathek* is equally ambiguous and it is not possible to determine a single significance for the variety of bizarre creatures and strange events of the story.

⁹³ My claim is in contrast with John Garret who interprets the novel according to "Vathek's horizontal perspective" (25).

⁹⁴ Ballister correctly highlights that the description of this first meeting is told in "the third person personal narration", that is from Vathek's inner perspective whereas Beckford, generally adopts a "detached and cynical irony" to narrate the entire story (367).

⁹⁵ As explained in Henley's note, the Peries were mythical beings and their name means "the beautiful race of creatures which constitutes the link between angels and men" (*Vathek* 183, Note 1).

⁹⁶ The surname is sometimes spelled with a single "z": Guinizelli.

⁹⁷ It is important to observe the dialectical opposition between Nouronihar and Goulchenrouz. When he wakes up from the artificially induced deadly slumber, the boy appreciates the fresh air and rejoices because he can "behold the firmament spangled over with stars" (79).

⁹⁸ The *topos* was used by Thomas Sterns Eliot (1888-1965) in the Canto "The Burial of the Dead" of *The Waste Land* (1922): "I had not thought death had undone so many".

⁹⁹ Randall Craig develops a classical argument for *Vathek* and introduces a classical triadic division in the text reproducing the scheme of *agon* (conflict), *pathos* (death-struggle) and *anagnorisis* (final discovery). This division was originally highlighted by Northrop Frye in his critical studies of poetic mythology. Despite Craig's interesting motivations, I would rather argue that the three-phase classical development would be more suitable for the Radcliffean novels or for *The Monk*.

¹⁰⁰ Born in Russia to a shipbuilder and an Englishwoman, Cozens travelled to England and to Italy where he met Claude-Joseph Vernet. He worked in the French painter's studio in Rome. When he moved to England, he worked at Eton and taught various aristocratic children. He opportunistically disappeared from Beckford's life when the scandal broke out.

¹⁰¹ Beckford met Vernet when he was twenty-three in 1783. The French painter realized that Beckford was already a genuine connoisseur of art in spite of his young age. Beckford, as well as his father, acquired masterpieces of various Dutch, French and Italian masters that were kept at Fonthill for his personal enjoyment during the long years of his bizarre solitary life, apparently "surrounded by catamites" (Norton "The Fool of Fonthill"). Many paintings that belonged to his collections are now owned by the National Gallery in London (Gerald Reitlinger). The catalogue of masterpieces at Fonthill Abbey, sold at the 1823 auction, contains an impressive variety of authors and paintings of all epochs, without mentioning artefacts, furniture and precious objects.

¹⁰² Beckford frequently joked about his age in his correspondence. After he turned eighty, he humorously observed that death had probably forgotten about him (Alexander). Indeed, with Wordsworth's exception, he survived the majority of Gothic writers and Romantic poets active between the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries.

¹⁰³ Looking up the names in the auction catalogue list can give a sense of what a majestic and rich palace Beckford inhabited. It was an art lovers' paradise: Brueghel, Sebastiano del Piombo, Guercino, Carracci, Correggio, Paolo Veronese, Canaletto, Domenichino, Claude, Salvator Rosa, Poussin, Robert Hubert, Cima da Conegliano, Raphael, Luca Signorelli, Andrea Mantegna, Perugino, Leonardo da Vinci, Louis Le Nain, Teniers, Velázquez, Hans Holbein, Rubens, Van Eyck, Greuze, Rembrandt, Murillo, Watteau, Bronzino, Bassano, Ruisdael, Bellini, Albrecht Dürer, Wilson, Palma, Vandermeer, Andrea del Sarto, and Gainsborough were among the renowned artists he owned in a collection of myriad paintings, drawings, and miniatures. Interestingly, the collection also included Jacques Callot's drawings and studies. Callot was active during the seventeenth century. Beyond the traditional rendering of landscapes and naturalist characters, he was famous for depicting strange and grotesque creatures. It may be likely that Callot inspired Beckford to delineate the hideous Giaour.

¹⁰⁴ One of the few painters who had never been on the Grand Tour, Lambert (1700-1765) had interiorised Rosa and Lorrain's style and created an appreciated method of landscape painting. He reproduced Oriental landscapes, as well. He was a renowned theatre scenery painter, a detail that was did not go unnoticed by Beckford.

¹⁰⁵ Wright of Derby's influences can be found in Radcliffe's nocturnal sketches.

¹⁰⁶ Watteau was abundantly present in the Beckfords' art collection. I would argue that Watteau is also frequently present in *Vathek* in the writer's delineation of variegated assemblies.

¹⁰⁷ An admirer and friend of D. Hume, William Robertson (1721-1793), Adam Smith (1723-1790), and Adam Ferguson (1723-1816), Gibbon had developed his historical method following the patterns dictated by Enlightenment and Machiavelli's teachings connected with civic humanism (J.G.A. Pocock). Nicolò Machiavelli (1469-1527) and, I would add, Francesco Guicciardini (1483-1540), were observers of virtue and its potential development or degeneration in politics. Their studies had a deep impact on Gibbon, who extensively travelled to Switzerland and Italy to make observations and researches to complete his masterpiece.

¹⁰⁸ Petronius Arbiter *Elegantiarum* (ca. 27-66 AD) came from the ancient town of Massalia, now Marseille in France. He belonged to a later generation (compared to Virgil, Horace and Ovid), being a contemporary of Emperor Nero. Petronius was a person of rare and superior elegance. A lover of riches and luxury, he led a profligate and voluptuous life, according to Tacitus's testimony in his *Annals*. Petronius described the decadence of Rome in his celebrated *Satyricon* (ca. 60-4 AD), a semi-fantastic ironic story describing luxury and excesses, which was actually full of allusions to real people. The protagonist is in love with his young servant, a handsome sixteen-year-old boy and object of sexual desire for both men and women.

3. Virgilian Idyllic, Gothic Terror and Ariostean Magic in Ann Radcliffe's *The Romance of the Forest*

3.1 The Mysteries of a Gothic Visionary

The Romance of the Forest (1791) is not generally considered Radcliffe's most important novel. That title is instead borne by the extensively analysed *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794), which is almost unanimously reputed to be her masterpiece together with *The Italian* (1797). However, *The Romance of the Forest* was universally acclaimed and made the author famous (Scott, Lévy, Townshend and Angela Wright, Deborah Rogers, Beatrice Battaglia, and Chloe Chard).

Ann Radcliffe was one of the most important writers at the end of the eighteenth century. She greatly influenced her contemporaries and different generations of Romantic poets such as Coleridge, Wordsworth, Byron¹, Shelley and John Keats (Lévy, Battaglia, Alison Milbank, Chard).² Even though she is included in the category of female Gothic writers, my aim is to demonstrate that her writing is much more complex and articulated than is generally thought. In particular, I consider the influence of Classical and Renaissance authors that have occasionally been detected by some critics. My intention is to demonstrate that Radcliffe's cultural knowledge was wide and included elements of classicism that were not casual or superficial but deeply rooted and consciously used.

In spite of her apparently simple life, tracing Ann Radcliffe's profile is rather complicated. The posthumously published *Gaston De Blondville* (1826), was the sixth novel after a series of commercial literary successes that made her

a renowned and appreciated writer. The preface included a memoir of Mrs. Radcliffe's life written by Thomas Noon Talfourd, who did not however sign it, following both Mr. Radcliffe's instructions and his personal intention of not appearing in that apologetic role (Rogers, Norton, Battaglia).³ Her essay *On the Supernatural*, defining the differences between terror and horror in literature, was also published posthumously in the form of a philosophical dialogue.⁴

When Radcliffe died on 7 February 1823, she had not published anything for more than twenty years.⁵ She had been remarkably successful in the decade of the 1790s when she had written five books in less than eight years. They all turned out to be literary and financial bestsellers in Britain and across the Continent where they were translated and read with equal curiosity and pleasure.⁶ Although Ann Ward was born in 1764, coincidentally the year of the publication of Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* (Townshend and Wright), into a low middle-class Unitarian family of haberdashers (Scott, Julia Kavanagh, Lévy, Rogers, Norton), she had important relatives and ancestors on both parents' side.⁷ What all researchers agree on is that she lived for some years with her uncle Thomas Bentley, the owner, together with Josiah Wedgwood, of the Wedgwood china factory.⁸ Ann started living with her uncle's family for long periods and I would claim that this experience developed and deeply influenced her cultural interests.⁹

The publication of *The Romance of the Forest* in 1791 corresponded to the beginning of her major literary success and her fame extended rapidly thereafter. When she published *The Mysteries of Udolpho* in 1794 she was acclaimed as a great writer. She became the "best-paid novelist of her

generation [and the] most highly praised woman of her age” (Norton x). Her literary success was astonishing and brought both fame and wealth to her family.¹⁰ During the next three years, she made several journeys in Britain and organized a tour in Europe.¹¹ Mrs. Radcliffe, as she was now known by the general public, published her last novel, *The Italian* in 1797, which was a huge success, even though critical opinions were mixed (D. Rogers *The Critical Response to Ann Radcliffe*).¹² However, in spite of her growing fame, she stopped writing altogether after the publication of *The Italian* in 1797.¹³

Like many other scholars, Clery stresses the increase in the disparaging terminology that was invented to define the Gothic after 1796: “modern romance”, “the terrible school”, “the terrorist system of novel writing”, “terrorist novel writing”, “hobgoblin romance” (148). When the expression ‘Radcliffe school’ was coined by critics, she probably could not sustain the analogy between her creations and lower quality Gothic *romances* and novels that were published later. I would claim that one possible explanation could be that she that she could not accept being included in an abhorred literary *hoi polloi* that imitated her style.¹⁴

The selected pages of Radcliffe’s journals are interesting, but the memoir and the pieces of diaries do not cast light on questions that remain unanswered. Although the portrayal provides some interesting details, it cannot give an exhaustive image of the writer.¹⁵ Moreover, it may also sound partially false in consideration of Talfourd’s private statements, which highlight contradictions and Mr. Radcliffe’s biased interference on the writing (Battaglia 41, note 1).¹⁶ In spite of the vast critical literature on the author of *The Mysteries*

of *Udolpho*, it is still possible to detect a series of unsolvable dichotomies in her works. Radcliffe's novels have been systematically analysed to find clues about her personality and detect biographical elements to complete the pieces of the enigma of her secluded existence. After all, Beckford underwent the same process. The biographies and monographs by Rogers, Miles, Norton, Battaglia, Townshend and Wright seem to contradict the idyllic image of a reserved woman presented by her earlier biographers.¹⁷ Some critics speculate that the mysteries and sense of anguish in her novels may have been a mirror of an unsatisfactory life.¹⁸

Positive critical opinions on Radcliffe's novels were general but not unanimous. One of the most aggressive critiques was expressed by Rev. Richard Polwhele in his poem "The Unsex'd Female" published in 1798, where the conservative intellectual and clergyman, well-known translator of Greek authors, attacked the most popular women writers of the day, among whom Radcliffe could be identified, even if not clearly mentioned. Nancy Armstrong underlines that Maria Edgeworth (1768-1848) wrote an unflattering observation in a text written about proper activities for women, indirectly aimed at Radcliffe.¹⁹ Moreover, some unfavourable judgements had negative repercussions for the author.²⁰

Other interpretations were apparently more promising. Scott dedicated some pages to Ann Radcliffe in *His Life of the Novelists* (1826), where he commended her works.²¹ He praised her poetic style applied to prose, which was original and new.²² However, his critique was not without ambiguities.²³ Rogers, and also Townshend and Wright²⁴, demonstrate that the reviews of her early

novels showed a mild appreciation of her style and her stories, but became later more enthusiastic and appreciative of her writing. Her third novel allowed her to come out of anonymity when various critics declared their appreciation.²⁵

3.2. Dichotomies in Radcliffe

The first major problem that several critics have tried to solve was (and still is) to define whether Radcliffe's works were conservative or revolutionary. It is possible to ascertain two conflicting opinions about the true nature of her political and social views. The general politicization, either conscious or unconscious, was considered inevitable after the dramatic facts of the French Revolution in Paulson's critique (535) and Punter's analysis (*The Literature of Terror* 57). Even though Radcliffe did not share Wollstonecraft and other writers' political engagement in favour of the Revolution, she expressed understated political opinions (Claudia Johnson 76) - a hypothesis dismissed by Chard; J. Watt asserts that she used aesthetics to avoid political discourse (108). While following Bakhtin's theories of dialogism and *heteroglossia* and therefore accepting the interrelation between the author and contemporary influences, either cultural and political, Jacqueline Howard argues that Ann Radcliffe's novels were not subversive or political (*Reading Gothic Fiction*)

Marilyn Butler considers Radcliffe a sentimentalist (22) but claims that she may have been considered a revolutionary in her period because "alarmists [...] detected subversion in an entire range of fashions acceptable in the 1780s [that] were to fall under suspicion in the following decade" (36). She posits that "while not supporting nor presumably consciously sharing the feminist ideological position, Radcliffe pushes further than anyone yet the novels'

technique for seeing the world through explicitly female eyes” (95) Feminist critics have the tendency to consider her work as carrying a revolutionary message in favour of her own sex.²⁶ Clery posits that she was moderately liberal as can be seen in certain passages of her more successful novels. Her “latent radicalism” is embodied in the figures of her usually beautiful female protagonists. Adeline and Emilie, in *The Romance of the Forest* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* respectively, are perhaps the best examples to demonstrate the existence of the dialectics of freedom that is basically inherent to her stories. Clery also argues that Radcliffe could not be totally radical because she conformed to the rules of propriety obsessively imposed on women (109). Therefore, her heroines are compliant with social requests at the conclusion of their adventures.²⁷

The second dichotomy concerns novels and *romance*. Critics’ insistence on *genre* codification to distinguish the novel from the *romance* denotes the need for a difference in styles as well as in social messages, the former apparently being an expression (generally masculine) of pure realism and the latter usually representing a description of female reaction to rough patriarchy. Deborah Ross has rejected the rigid division between novel and *romance* in her study on *romance* and realism in female writing. The definition of *romance* for Radcliffe’s works had been posited by Scott because it justified the strangeness of her stories and at the same did not allow her to be part of the *elite* of novelists of the calibre of Defoe, Richardson, Smollett and Scott himself. Summers recognized the value of her *romances* because they magically offered three different kinds of Gothic stories: the “historical”, the “sentimental” and the

“horror Gothic” (30), whose distinction he did not however clarify. Kilgour is one of the very few critics who maintains that the Gothic is a “hybrid between the novel and *romance*” (6). Nevertheless, the distinction is crucial for other scholars. The difference between *romance* and novel dates back to a period prior to Radcliffe’s novels.²⁸ *Romance* was not quite accepted as a literary form and its re-introduction by Walpole with *The Castle of Otranto* had been considered more as the author’s caprice than as a dignified literary genre. However, Ann Radcliffe was able to create an unusual and personal style for the *genre* that acquired importance.²⁹

A further interpretative problem in Radcliffe has been to determine the reason for the explained supernatural. This aspect has baffled both readers and critics. Summers had defined it as “anagoristical elucidations” (133).³⁰ Coleridge, Scott, and Laetitia Barbauld were among the contemporary critics disappointed with her technique. Punter, Miles and various scholars find her obsession with the final explanation and consequent rationalization of the apparent mysteries in her novels as a Radcliffean prerogative and as a stylistic fault as well. Norton and Cery find two opposing explanations for her incongruous aesthetic choice. In Norton’s opinion, her Unitarian background accounts for her inevitable rational explanations at the conclusion of her novels. Cery’s explanation is more practical. The fact of denying the supernatural was simply an acceptance of the rules of balance and measure in tone, dictated by the neoclassical authors along the century that were still valid. Essentially, Cery posits, Radcliffe did not have many alternatives or real freedom of stylistic choice, being a woman writer. She may have let her readers fly in the realms of

imagination on the condition that they came back to earth at the conclusion of her stories.³¹ Although *The Romance of the Forest* is not exempt from that technique, it shows however darker aspects that cannot be clarified with the usual rationalization of the events, which is employed in all of her stories. One element that remains unexplained is the realism of Adeline's nightmares that put her in contact with her dead father: the message Adeline receives in her dreams is the image of the ruthless and bloody crime of which her father was a victim. Moreover, the fairy-tale characteristic of the novel is an exception to her narrative mode that generally tends to rationalize mysterious situations.³² I would argue that this could be the evidence of Radcliffe's desire to dare experiment multiple narrative possibilities.

Among Radcliffe's themes, the *topos* of the veil has been considered as a constant and mysterious feature. Images of the "veil" can be found in *The Sicilian Romance*, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, *The Italian* and, in a lesser way, in *The Romance of the Forest*. Critics have analysed its possible meanings: Elisabeth Broadwell identified it with chastity and mystery. Eve Kosofsky S. saw it as the basic paradigm of prohibition and sexual desire. Jesse Molesworth gave the veil the function of the hymen, the sexual act and the loss of virginity. Suzanne Greenfield and Carol Ann Howells found an alternative interpretation, and considered the veil as an expression of lesbian desire.³³ A similar theory, applied to an opposite context (daughter/father) is supported by Raymond Mize who argues that Adeline's nightmares in *The Romance of the Forest* are an evident symbolism of sexual desire between father/paternal figure and daughter. He interprets Adeline's repetitive fainting as a signal of compliance (69-74).

3.3. Beckford, Radcliffe, Lewis: antithetical and complementary

A novel entitled *Azemia* was published in 1798. It was signed by an unknown author called Miss Jacquetta Agneta Mariana Jenks, of Bellegrove Priory, Wales. The novel was in reality Beckford's burlesque response to the excesses of Radcliffean enthusiasm.³⁴ Beckford's mocking and irreverent tone transforms his text into a carnivalesque parody of literature as well as of British society at the end of the century.³⁵

Vathek's protagonists are described from the outside and their feelings are not generally communicated to the reader, except when the caliph falls in love or when the characters acquire conscience of their destiny before falling into a hopeless oblivion. Their actions are described panoramically and it is not possible to understand their inner motives. The characters in *The Romance of the Forest* go on a journey as well and are equally itinerant before discovering their existence' unexpected truth. Their interiority is not completely unveiled as the perspective is generally limited to the heroine.³⁶ However, before Adeline's point of view becomes dominant, Radcliffe moves from one character to the other in order to increase the sense of suspense.³⁷ Interestingly, the perspective on the scenes becomes panoramic and exterior to the characters when they meet for the first time so as to communicate the physical impressions they receive from each other, especially when describing Adeline's beauty.³⁸

Beckford's literary creation is multifaceted and always changing; he is more of a literary *virtuoso* than a systematic creator and his work does not seem to follow a scheme. Radcliffe's novels, on the other hand, present a certain level

of homogeneity therefore it is possible to define her plots as similar to one another with evident parallelisms, such as the orphan heroine, although differences exist at a deeper level, as for the example in the typology of the villain.

Imagination and inventiveness are Beckford, Radcliffe and Lewis' common denominators. However, Ann Radcliffe tends towards the improvement of her protagonists, who may be the expressions of a female *Bildungsroman*, Beckford's characters, by contrast, do not change or improve but continue towards a *descensio ad inferos*, their descent towards hell - a characteristic which is shared by Lewis's protagonists and Ambrosio in particular.

C. Johnson claims that Adeline undergoes a process of "masculinization" during the different phases of the story, which is exactly the opposite of what happens to Ambrosio in *The Monk*, because of his latent change towards a psychological feminization posited by Williams (*Art of Darkness*). Notwithstanding her young age and the difficulties she faces, Adeline does not lose her mind and remains in control of every situation *vis-à-vis* all of the other characters.³⁹

It is difficult to say whether Radcliffe was influenced by her unconventional predecessor, even though Beckford's elegant landscape descriptions and images of terror may have played an important role in her writing. In turn, Lewis absorbs various ideas, devices and imagery from both Beckford and Radcliffe, taking them to the extreme consequences and daring to write what they might have only vaguely conceived. The most clear-cut difference that distinguishes Radcliffe from the other two writers is the

orientation towards a positive and reassuring end in all her novels, a possibility which is rejected both by Beckford and Lewis.

The ambiguity and bizarre nature of events in Beckford may be considered as supernatural manifestations even though it is not always clear if they are used as symbols or *divertissement*. Lewis clearly introduces the supernatural in *The Monk* whereas Radcliffe generally describes supernatural effects that turn out to be objective mechanical facts. Even though inexplicable situations are later rationalized, the protagonist's nightmares are genuine preternatural phenomena.

3.4. Influences from the long Eighteenth Century and Other Periods

The following lines are interesting as they convey imagery full of sentimentalism and nostalgia, surrounded by a gloomy atmosphere:

In these deep solitudes and awful cells
where heav'nly-pensive contemplation dwells,
and ever-musing melancholy reigns;
what means this tumult in a vestal's veins? ⁴⁰

“Deep solitudes”, “ever-musing melancholy” and “awful cells” are a chain of *topoi* that were typical of the Gothic. However, this Gothic atmosphere is created by one of the most fervent classicists that were active during the first decades of the eighteenth century. The style of the imagery described here was to become effulgent seventy years after these verses were created by Pope (Summers 21).

It is likely that Radcliffe used multiple sources. She intended to be creative and to stress both her knowledge and her education but also meant to show her respect for a multitude of works that she mentioned in her stories. Interestingly, *The Romance of Forest* marks the beginning of the insertion of

epigraphs in every chapter that convey a special message, which is supposed to be connected with the deep meaning of the story. I would consider this special device as performing two functions; one is suggestive, and the other is cultural. The epigraph usually creates some expectations and clues about the chapter even though it is possible to argue that there is not always a strict correspondence between the short introductory passage and the development of the chapter and/or the story. The epigraph has more of an evocative function that implies an imaginative response in the reader. The second function symbolizes Radcliffe's homage to the writer or poet who created the selected passage in the epigraph. In this way, Radcliffe's text becomes an ideal anthology of literary figures both past and contemporary that she delights in inserting in her novels.

Among the works that Ann Radcliffe mentions in her several epigraphs are Thompson's *The Seasons* (1730) and *The Castle of Indolence* (1748). Thompson was the poet who, in his own words, had exalted "the works of nature" that awake "philosophical reflection and the moral sentiment" (Thompson ix). *The Seasons* did not belong to a particular *genre* but imitated the Virgilian georgic style with their didactic qualities describing the works of agriculture and the cycle of the seasons (James Sambrook).⁴¹ Cowper's *Task* sympathizes "with the simple and humble of the earth" (Butler 36). Radcliffe also cited Beattie's meditations⁴², the poems of William Mason (1724-1797), whose works were often used as libretti for operas, and Anna Seward's poems (1742-1809). It is likely that Radcliffe mentioned passages from various authors for cultural dissemination in order to make poets and writers known to a larger

audience. Radcliffe also quotes graveyard poems, especially by William Collins (1721-1749) and Thomas Gray (1716-1771). Their gloomy and melancholic visions provide Radcliffe with atmospheres and themes that exalt obscurity, the counterpart of the contemporary eminence of light in Neoclassicism and Enlightenment.⁴³ Radcliffe also appreciated Thomas (1728-1790) and Joseph Warton (1722-1800), who were the advocates of a “transition in taste” (Varma 25) in favour of old “primitive” poetic forms.⁴⁴

Radcliffe shows constant reverence for Shakespeare and Walpole⁴⁵ that she recognises as important sources of her inspiration. It is possible to claim that she used *romance* as her stylistic mark as a consequence of Shakespeare and Walpole’s authority. *The Italian* was the last novel she published during her lifetime and it is also the last work where she used epigraphs.⁴⁶ The story is introduced by some lines from Walpole’s tragedy *The Mysterious Mother*. There is clearly an attempt to convey darker and more tragic atmospheres, which distantly refer to the gloomy *finale* in *The Monk* as well. However, Radcliffe introduces essential changes: although the figure of the patriarch is not eliminated and is embodied in the cruel Schedoni (the obscure masculine character), she includes the figure of the horrible matriarch, who is equally or even more systematically lethal and dangerous, embodied by the Marchesa de Vivaldi. Also, she reverses Walpole’s Mathilda and Lewis’ Antonia’s negative destinies by the choice of successful heroines who enjoy a happy ending. The fascination for Shakespeare is consistent in Radcliffe’s works.⁴⁷ Several epigraphs in three of her novels are dedicated to the great bard whereas *A Sicilian Romance* opens with a sentence from *Hamlet*.⁴⁸ Interestingly, she introduces a

vast gallery of Shakespearian works in her short prologues.⁴⁹ It is important to note that if, on the one hand, the selection of texts chosen for the introduction of chapters in *The Romance of the Forest* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* is varied and include a plethora of authors and different styles, then on the other hand, the selection in *The Italian* is exclusively taken from Walpole and Shakespeare, with the exception of two short poems that have not been identified.⁵⁰

The atmosphere of speculative musing in some of Radcliffe's pages recalls her Uncle Bentley's philosophical passion that he transmitted to her. The teachings of philosophers, especially from the eighteenth century, are present in her novels. The main characters are often the mouthpieces for theories concerning social, cultural, and metaphysical aspects. They meditate on the value of music, art and literature, and the power of the universe as the intermediary between a spiritual superior entity and human creatures.⁵¹

Music is an important feature in Radcliffe's plots as it announces sad events or is connected to strong emotional moments. Characters in Radcliffe's novels have a special relationship with music, which seems to play a very important role. It both soothes the spirit and announces events of great importance (Frits Noske). Music as an emotional reflection was a special device used by George Friedrich Handel (1685-1759), whose operas had been dominating the musical scene in England and in Europe until the end of the century, in spite of Dennis' moralizing attacks.⁵² Radcliffe was a fervent admirer of the composer. She often went to concerts, and attending Handel's operas most likely introduced her to some important authors who had influenced the musician's themes.

3.5. The Enigma of Castles and Ruins

Charlotte Smith published the second volume of *The Banished Man. A Novel*, in 1794. The preface to this second volume was probably written after the astoundingly successful publication of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. It unequivocally showed the resentment that Smith⁵³ felt for Radcliffe that she probably considered a rival but most of all a clear imitator of her style. Therefore, “she attacked her subtly” (Norton 155). Whether Ann Radcliffe had plagiarized Smith’s architectural inventions consciously or if she was unaware that she was employing a material belonging to somebody else, it is not possible to know with certainty. However, it is true that she did not only specialize in the description of buildings of all kinds but she also gave a special relevance to her architectural inventions, which become as important as real characters. The architectural variety in Radcliffe’s novels is remarkable, for her descriptions and for the symbolism that the various buildings acquire in her stories. S. Jung highlighted that *Vathek*’s architectural richness and variety was responsible for subsequent writers’ focus on architecture, and Radcliffe was among them.⁵⁴

The castle is relevant in the plots of *A Sicilian Romance* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* in its contrast with the exterior world. *The Romance of the Forest* introduces an interesting sequence of places symbolizing the various steps in the development of the adventure and the improvement in the protagonist’s situation.⁵⁵ Left as such, the description of different architectures may seem a simple narrative device in Radcliffe. A more attentive reading reveals strange mutable qualities in the buildings that may be ascribed to Giovanni Battista Piranesi’s strong visual influence, which can be admired in his etchings of prisons

(*Le Carceri*) and multiform imaginary structures. Nevertheless, his influence is far from explaining Ann Radcliffe's narrative technique, specialized in expanding and contracting spaces in a sort of fluid and hallucinatory vision, which not only transforms castles, mansions and ruins into labyrinths but entire architectures, which seem to become themselves living structures. Her narrations appear to turn the architectural element into a protean entity. The progressive presentation of the ruins and the abbey in the second chapter of *The Romance of the Forest* is a remarkable example of Radcliffe's narrative skill that can be admired in the long passage that follows:

When he unclosed the door, the dismal aspect of the place revived the apprehension of Madame De La Motte, and extorted from Adeline an inquiry whither they were going. Peter held up the light to shew the narrow stair-case that wound round the tower; but La Motte, observing the second door, drew back the rusty bolts, and entered a spacious apartment, which, from its style and condition, was evidently of a much later date than the other part of the structure: though desolate and forlorn, it was very little impaired by time; the walls were damp, but not decayed, and the glass was yet firm in the windows. They passed on to a suite of apartments resembling the first they had seen, and expressed their surprise at the incongruous appearance of this part of the edifice with the mouldering walls they had left behind. These apartments conducted them to a winding passage, that received light and air through marrow cavities, placed high in the wall and was at length closed by a door barred with iron, which being with some difficulty opened, they entered a vaulted

room. (...) The room appeared to have been built in modern times upon a Gothic plan. Adeline approached a large window that formed a kind of recess raised by one step over the level of the door; she observed to La Motte that the whole floor was inlaid with mosaic work; which drew from him a remark, that the style of this apartment was not strictly Gothic. He passed on to a door which appeared on the opposite side of the apartment, and, unlocking it, found himself in the hall by which he had entered the fabric. He now perceived, what the gloom had before concealed, a spiral stair-case, which led to a gallery above, and which, from its present condition, seemed to have been built with the more modern part of the fabric, though this also affected the Gothic mode of architecture: La Motte had little doubt that these stairs led to apartments, corresponding with those he had passed below, and hesitated whether to explore them (20)

This extract can help understand Radcliffe's narrative technique. The first aspect that can be detected is the remarkable strategy used to create suspense and expectation. The remotest recesses of the ruin are slowly uncovered while the characters, initially moved by curiosity, enter a state of agitation which is transmitted to the reader. Accompanied by their servant, La Motte, his wife, and Adeline are exploring the place, which may become their refuge. The characters' slow progression along the partially decaying walls is ominous and every corner may hide an unpredictable danger or horrible secret. The "door barred with iron" is unusual for its excessive "strength" and its presence is apparently inexplicable. It leads to "a large vaulted room", whose uncommon aspect and position create

further doubts. The characters observe structures, passages, and architectures that seem to be magically multiplying. Radcliffe is able to create special effects. The abbey is a protean element, fluidly augmenting its framework in the form of self-reproductive fractals that confuse, frighten but also, enigmatically, protect the characters. This characteristic is common to the majority of buildings she describes, but the ruin of *The Romance of the Forest* features this ambiguous mutability reiteratively. Moreover, the fact that the style of the galleries and the apartments is described as not genuinely “Gothic” is a form of meta-literary irony. Radcliffe herself underlines that the Gothic on display is artificial, like de Louthenbourg’s *trompe-l’oeil* theatrical effects, or a scenery in an opera by Handel, or a vision of Piranesi’s *Prisons*. My claim is that her changeable architectures convey a variety of meanings. They reflect the mystery of the plot, they are theatrical stages of suspense, and they are reflections of visual arts. Radcliffe’s word-painting of labyrinthine dwellings and alluring descriptions of landscapes are unparalleled narrative prerogatives.

3.6. Mysterious Landscapes between Reality and Imagination

Landscape becomes a much more important figure in Radcliffe’s narratives than in the work of contemporary novelists. Eric Hirsch highlights that “the word landscape was introduced in the English language in the late sixteenth century as a technical term used by painters. It came from the Dutch *Landschap*”. Therefore landscape was acknowledged and appreciated as a form of art. “This ideal or imagined worlds depicted in various genres of landscape painting by various artists such as, Nicolas Poussin, Claude Lorrain, and Salvator Rosa was linked to the perception of countryside scenery and its subsequent

improvement (...): the goal was to achieve a correspondence between the pictorial idea and the countryside itself" (Hirsch 2). As a consequence we may posit that Radcliffe wanted to provide the landscape with a narrative dimension that did not exist before.

The excessive inclusion of nature seems to be in contrast with Radcliffe's surrounding reality because "by 1800 England was one of the least wooded of all north European nations" (Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels 43). The question is to discover why she insisted on presenting luxuriant vegetation in all of her novels. The explanation may reside in her desire to reproduce *loci* that could be compatible with the sublime, the picturesque and the classical. In some critics' opinion *The Romance of the Forest* is perhaps the least Burkean of her novels, the atmospheres being generally picturesque or romantic and rarely horrific. Although some events taking place in the forest and in the abbey ruins may convey a certain level of suspense, the surrounding nature is beautiful, mysterious or majestic. It rarely conveys a sense of awe and sublime fear. The horrors that can be found in frightening images in *The Italian* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* are almost absent, even though the mysterious ruins of the abbey and the scenes from Adeline's nightmares seem to represent Burke's description of the sublime as the consequence of extreme emotional states. We may argue that sublimity is present in the novel without excess, harmoniously blended with classical influences and romantic intuitions.⁵⁶ Some critiques, however, are not appreciative. Joseph Wiesenfarth considers Radcliffe's search for sublimity an excess of confusion (5) whereas David Morris claims that the sublime can surround women (not vice versa) as it represents a penetrating masculine force

(309). However, Morris's generalization cannot be easily adapted to Radcliffe and her favourite sublime contexts. The moments of high tension are equally felt by male and female characters and the sublime acquires a universal status.

I would argue that *The Romance of the Forest* incorporates both the sublime, theorized by Burke as well as the picturesque, as idealized by Gilpin. In describing the mysterious forest, the gloomy ruins and the strange messages in Adeline's nightmare in the first part of the novel, Radcliffe exploits all of the arguments connected with the sublime whereas the second part of the novel is dedicated to the inspiring picturesque images in Savoy, characterized by a soothing simplicity, announcing the story's happy ending. It is a positive compromise of two cultural and apparently incompatible elements, which had been dominating the philosophical theorization on the effects of nature.⁵⁷

3.7. Italy and France: Real, Fictitious, and Fictional Journeys

Travel journals were frequently issued during the century to describe journeys on the Continent. The Grand Tour was usually followed by the publishing of travel diaries, letters, fictionalized travel tales, or literary descriptions. Painters and artists moved to other countries in order to refine their techniques, whereas affluent and cultivated people went to mainland Europe for culture and entertainment. Young gentlemen could travel more easily than women to various countries without the danger of ruining their reputation.⁵⁸ The Grand Tour was generally the crowning of a long intellectual pilgrimage that took the offspring of wealthy families to different countries and places of interest. Visiting other countries may have beneficial or catastrophic effects: the journeys of Englishmen on the Continent were saluted with either

enthusiasm or extreme loathing, as Attilio Brilli explains in his study on Italy as a favourite destination. Ever since the Renaissance, the discovery of Italy was characterized by two opposing ideas: that the country was either the place of vice, infested with *banditti* and full of *lazzaroni*⁵⁹ or that it could be described as a place of natural and artistic beauties, offering a mild climate and passionate individuals. Moralists had warned against the dangers of sending young men⁶⁰ abroad where they would soon become acquainted with vice while enthusiasts described the Grand Tour as the soul inspiring discovery of culture and history.⁶¹

During the eighteenth century the semi-fictional rendering of a journey was not completely realistic and it oscillated between the acid descriptions and pungent irony of Smollett's *Travels through France and Italy* (1766) or improbable adventures as in Sterne's *A Sentimental Journey through France and Italy* (1768), actually a response to Smollett's exaggerated contempt. The dangers of the journeys on the Continent were emphasized by the descriptions of extreme geographies where uncommon adventures took place.⁶² Massimiliano Demata argues that the "representation of Italy in eighteenth-century fiction was largely shaped by the knowledge of Italy" provided by writers who in many cases had not been there, such as Richardson. "On the contrary, having travelled through and written about Italy, John Moore was less acquainted with the country's geography and history" than many others (7).

Patrick Brydone and Henry Swinburne wrote original accounts and sublime descriptions of less widely known places such as the south and Sicily, in particular, with its majestic and mythical Mount Etna. The former wrote a text dedicated to William Beckford, the writer's father, which was published in 1773

(*A Tour through Sicily and Malta*). Swinburne explored the regions in the reign of the Bourbons and his experience was published with an exuberance of details in 1790 (*Travels in the Two Sicilies*). Both authors were successful and might have influenced *A Sicilian Romance* and *The Italian* with their settings in Southern Italy.⁶³

Pam Perkins⁶⁴ maintains that “Radcliffe never visited Italy: she did not need to” because she had probably read a lot of travel writing (35). However, her imagination together with probable extensive reading and the knowledge of a variety of visual masterpieces all contributed to Radcliffe’s highly descriptive narrations. She deliberately created word-paintings to match the canvasses of Rosa, Claude and Poussin. (Norton, and many others). In addition to sublimity and picturesque, this passage from *The Mysteries of Udolpho* seems to scatter from a real autobiographical travel experience for the profusion of details. However, the passage is more literary than real as it contains pictorial elements, probably observed in some paintings. She also betrays Virgil’s literary mould of the *Georgics*:

Beneath the dark and spreading branches, appeared to the North,
and to the East the woody Apennines, rising in majestic
amphitheatre, now black with pines, as she had been accustomed
to see them, but their loftiest summits crowned with ancient
forests of chestnut, oak, and oriental plane, now animated with
the rich tints of autumn, and which swept downward to the valley
uninterruptedly, except where some bold rocky promontory
looked out from among the foliage, and caught the passing gleam.
Vineyards stretched along the feet of the mountains, where the

elegant villas of the Tuscan nobility frequently adorned the scene, and overlooked slopes clothed with groves of olive, mulberry, orange and lemon. The plain, to which these declined, was coloured with the riches of cultivation, whose mingled hues were mellowed into harmony by an Italian sun.

(*Mysteries of Udolpho* 389)

Emily's escape into an unknown territory and in danger of being discovered by Montoni introduces a major sublime context, and the serene beauty of the scene conveys a picturesque setting. The bucolic aspect, represented by the vineyards, the olive trees and the cultivation, represent Radcliffe's added value. Here beauty is created through men's hard work, as in Virgil's *Georgics*. That the atmosphere is imbued with classicism, to which a pastoral touch is added, is confirmed a few passages afterwards: "Emily had been taught to venerate Florence as the seat of literature and the fine arts; but that its taste for classic story should descend to the peasants of the country, occasioned her both surprise and admiration. The Arcadian air of the girls next attracted her attention" (397), then she admired "the pastoral valleys of the Apennines" (427) and the "pastoral margin" of the Arno (433).⁶⁵ "Vineyards" and "olive trees" are repeatedly exalted in Virgil. Ann Radcliffe did not need to travel to describe her breath-taking geographies. With the exception of her first and last novels respectively taking place in Scotland and in England, she set her four most important stories in Italy and France. *A Sicilian Romance* is set in Italy, *The Romance of The Forest* develops in France and on the Alps of Savoy⁶⁶, and *The Italian* unfolds its dark events in Southern Italy. *The Mysteries of Udolpho* present multiple settings both in France and in Italy. The choice of Italy as an

exotic place for the Gothic was introduced by Walpole, and was “favoured by Radcliffe” (Norton). However, the bases for such a choice are not completely satisfactory as Williams interestingly suggests: “[i]n retrospect, Walpole’s choice seems so suitable that critics have seldom ventured beyond a few generalizations about these continental places as the obvious ‘other’ for late eighteenth-century Britain: absolutist and long-standing feudal governments in contrast to English ‘liberty’, ‘superstitious’ Roman Catholicism in contrast to enlightened Protestantism”. Williams posits that “fantasies of ‘otherness’ are historically contingent” but are determined by “a private dimension as well” (“Horace in Italy” 22). Radcliffe’s choice therefore may have been determined by the historical events taking place in France and the dramatic Italian political situation but also by her cultural knowledge of the two countries, which was both literary and artistic.

3.8. Radcliffe’s heroines, Love, and Marriage

In the first scene of the First Act in Marivaux’s *Jeu de l’Amour et du Hasard* (1730), Silvia is talking to her servant Lisette. Her father has found a *fiancé* for her but she utters some perplexities about tying the knot and becoming a wife. Actually, she reveals that, after observing the bizarre behaviour, the infidelities or the moody characters of her acquaintances’ husbands, she is thinking of rejecting all offers of marriage. The female protagonist expresses an opinion, which was not uncommon among women during the eighteenth century. Silvia is afraid of men’s erratic behaviours that cannot be detected before marriage. In a light, almost frivolous tone, she utters the same warnings expressed by Beatrice in William Shakespeare’s dark comedy,

Much Ado about Nothing. Accordingly, a quite similar opinion to Marivaux's Silvia and to Olympe de Gouges⁶⁷, though more drastic, can be read in the crude terms by Mary Wollstonecraft's protagonist in *The Wrongs of Woman* "Marriage has bastilled me for life" (155), confesses the protagonist to "the asylum ward". Here, the notorious frightening castle of the Bastille in Paris, used as a prison and dismantled by the revolutionary fury in 1789, becomes the gloomy metaphor for marriage.⁶⁸

Clerly argues that according to British legislation, the position of women was rather precarious. Generally excluded from inheritance or sent to a convent for economic reasons, if they had the right to inherit a part of the legacy, they could not keep their money and properties long.⁶⁹ Actually, they lost everything the moment they got married. The Law of England included the definition of *coverture*, explained by William Blackstone on the presentation of the law in 1770 (Clerly 125). Curiously, "[i]n the *Commentaries on the Law of England*, Blackstone likens English law to an ancient, venerable Gothic castle that simply requires modernization to render it effective in the eighteenth century" (Sue Chaplin *Law, Sensibility and the Sublime* 127). Economic freedom for women was almost impossible as their possessions were automatically absorbed by a husband as soon as the marriage had been celebrated. The analyses of women's status and the difficulties imposed by the idea of *coverture* had an influence on women's writing as well. Some features concerning inheritance and marriage are specific to Ann Radcliffe. As Kate Ferguson Ellis (*The Contested Castle*) and Clerly highlight in their analyses, Radcliffe's female protagonists become the legal heirs of relatives and benefactors' fortunes. They all recover their inheritance when

unduly appropriated by dishonest relatives or criminals. All of Radcliffe's heroines become extremely rich⁷⁰ against all odds and, what is even more interesting, they continue managing their fortunes even after they are married, a totally unrealistic legal dream. Usurpers are punished either by law or by death and the female protagonists are blessed more by the accumulation of wealth than by requited love.

Interestingly, tormented heroines and their unfortunate *fiancés'* marriages do not take place until the very end of Radcliffe's stories, when the final pages, or better the final lines, provide scarce details about the couple's future extra-textual conjugal bliss. Heroines' tribulations and marriage rejections seem to be Radcliffe's main *topoi*: Julia cannot accept the court of the enamoured Count Hippolitus in *A Sicilian Romance* while her stepmother's machinations aim at getting rid of her rights in the heritage line. *The Italian* features a reluctant Ellena de Rosalba who initially rejects Antonio de Vivaldi's court. Once she does, her future mother-in-law, while keeping her separate from Antonio, plots her murder until the very end.⁷¹ Emily is Radcliffe's most strong-willed and self-controlled heroine in the catalogue of female characters. She rejects Valancourt more than once. After turning a widower, St. Aubert discourages the young man from courting his daughter, in spite of his failing health and his problems. Once Emily remains orphan of both father and mother, she inexplicably rejects Valancourt's offers once more in spite of the innumerable dangers lurking in society for a girl without *coverture*. Adeline's situation is even more interesting because she moves in a world populated by masculine figures who are either potentially dangerous (the minority) or

sincerely protective (most of them), all consciously or unconsciously in love with her. Once all problems are resolved, she refuses marriage again. Only in the very last words of the text does the reader discover that she is living in bliss on a *château* near the lake with her husband and children.

Milbank identifies the basic female fears in the *topos* of the “imprisoned woman deprived of her property rights, as well as the maiden endangered with abduction” (x) whereas Eugenia DeLamotte perceives the constant “fear of violation” (29). On the contrary, according to C. Johnson this fear has no reason to subsist because of males’ effeminacy caused by vice (81-2). Radcliffe’s heroines become imperturbably proud *vis-à-vis* potential violators but develop an idiosyncrasy for marriage, which is not only a literary device to prolong the action and the narration. It may seem far-fetched to define it a social *malaise*, yet the redundant scepticism of marriage is the sign of a strong unsatisfied need for independence and social recognition.

The identification of women’s writing as distinguished from male writers (Ellen Moers, Juliann Fleenor), is a consistent part of feminist studies, which is also supported by several male critics. Ross recognizes the importance of these studies but avoids using the phrase “female Gothic” whose rigid definition does not include the variety of works by male and female writers of the last decades of the eighteenth century.⁷² Radcliffe’s stories include positive female protagonists who have to fight against figures that I call antagonistic females. Apart from the *topoi* of the missing mother and the benevolent father⁷³, it is possible to detect female figures showing different levels of cruelty and trying to frustrate, damage or destroy the protagonist. Whereas Madame De La Motte

shows indifference and apathy when the heroine is in danger because of her deep jealousy, Madame Cheron selfishly imposes her proud authority on Emily. Of a more dangerous kind is the intriguing and corrupt Maria de Vellorno, who, jealous of her step-daughters, is ready to do anything to get them out of the way. The most frightening and dark character, plotting in the shadow and ready to conspire against the protagonist to have her murdered, is the Marchesa De Vivaldi, one of the most vicious individuals in Radcliffe's oeuvre.⁷⁴

I would say that Radcliffe's progressive distancing from the eighteenth century literary canons is a form of cultural awareness, independent from gender. C. Johnson highlights Radcliffe's original talent for *suspense* and posits that she was able to create a mixture of different literary ingredients such as the sentimentality novel, the courtship plot and the Gothic mode (46). Radcliffe's descriptions changed the convention of Augustan fancy into Romantic imagination and she did it in a unique way.

3.9. *The Romance of the Forest: Interpretations and Techniques*

Joanna Southcott's autograph manuscript, written in 1803, was not a traditional critical analysis of Radcliffe's *Romance of the Forest*. In fact, it was a mystical reading of the text. This appraisal was supposedly dictated to Southcott by the Spirit of God. She claimed that *The Romance of the Forest* was an allegorical prophecy. She detected obscure messages in the novel, which she considered as "the channel for God's prophecies" (Norton). Adeline is seen as God's emissary whereas her major antagonist, Montalt, is the embodiment of Satan. Although Southcott's interpretation may seem unusual, or even absurd, it was not a rarity at the time.⁷⁵ The revolutionary events in France, especially the

Terror, had fuelled great anxieties about the future that manifested in a revived sense of “millennialism” whose manifestation “was the belief that ancient prophecies were now being fulfilled” (Norton 91).⁷⁶

Whereas some critics interpret the story from a Foucauldian perspective as far as anticipation and deferral are concerned⁷⁷, Norton claims that the novel is autobiographical and, behind the intriguing plot, it is possible to associate Adeline with the author. He argues that the female reader could fully identify with the protagonist - an aspect that was unconsciously appreciated by women for a latent aspect of proto-feminism (81-91).

Some critics consider the initial incident of the carriage and the consequent entrance in the mysterious forest as a symbol of romantic escapism (C. Johnson, Chard).⁷⁸ Coincidentally, the forest is a strong emotional and literary experience in Dante’s *Divine Comedy*, the echo of which was evidently much more present than what is generally thought. Other critics, such as Miles, support the psychoanalytical value of plot development. C. Johnson considers the protagonist Adeline “a palpitating provocation of the ethicosexual affectivity of men” (77), although she is a moral agent. A totally opposite idea, in spite of the evidence, is expressed by Janet Todd, who posits that Radcliffe “refuses to accept sexuality overtly” (266). I would argue that *The Romance of the Forest* introduces high levels of conscious sensuality that Radcliffe was absorbing from both classical and renaissance authors.

All of the different interpretations may leave us with a conundrum, which makes it difficult to define the text. Without following the visionary path of a mystical revelation, or the flight from civilization as foretold by Rousseau’s

social philosophy, or the image of the heroine as a sexual *agent provocateur*, it is possible to claim that *The Romance of the Forest* is a remarkable novel with a special structure, whose nucleus is the kidnapping of Adeline and the strange adventure in Montalt's mansion, which may represent the prologue to a story of perdition and vice. One of the key characters in the novel is De La Motte.⁷⁹ His life in Paris is marked by wrong moral choices and inexcusable errors that he is trying to erase with the help of his lawyer Guyot de Pitaval, based on a real French figure.⁸⁰ During his flight he saves Adeline from an obscure destiny, then finds a dark forest where his flight is suspended in the obscure enchantment of the place.⁸¹ Adeline's life is threatened and he has a chance to improve his moral character by saving the girl. The refuge that De La Motte finds in the forest – a place that is enthralling and at the same time threatening - helps him to keep away from perils and vice. However, other ordeals await him to test his conscience, which proves to be weak.

Radcliffe demonstrated that her cultural influences and literary sources were remarkably varied. This denoted that she had a high level of cultural knowledge that allowed her to use a variety of techniques, introduce narrative inventions, and deal with original themes. Her novels also show wide literary erudition. Her bucolic settings as well as her mysterious forests have matrixes in Antiquity and in Renaissance allusions and conceits.

3.10. Classic Antiquities and Latin Literature

The title of contemporary author Arundhaty Roy's sad novel *The God of Small Things* (1997) could be applied to Radcliffe's tranquil life, made of insignificant events in an apparently blissful *routine*, which maybe had turned

out to be nightmarish, instead. Actually, the image we get from Norton's biography⁸² is that Radcliffe's life was actually rather difficult. He also argues that Radcliffe could not possess sufficient cultural knowledge for two main reasons. The first one is that she probably did not attend any academy or schools for girls belonging to higher middle classes or the aristocracy, as her family did not have the proper means. Norton considers it improbable that she may have enrolled at the Lee sisters' Belvedere institute in Bath for a chronological discrepancy, as Ann was already older than the average students' age when the Lee sisters opened it (47). Moreover, he states that there is a lack of either internal or external documentation concerning her attendance, even though studies and testimonies assert that Ann was in contact with the Lee circle. The second reason Norton provides for poor cultural preparation is that, being a woman, she could know very little of the Classics that represented the cultural background of any gentleman, who could acquire it from an early age, both in the familiar context and thanks to an education in private schools and at university.⁸³ Classical studies were a male cultural convention and were considered necessary for them in their future activities, either political, legal or academic.⁸⁴

Other critics, especially during the Victorian age, expressed hostile views. In 1882, Margaret Oliphant praised her descriptions even though they were old-fashioned (Rogers, *Ann Radcliffe, Bio-Bibliography* 76). Kavanagh claimed that Radcliffe lacked "historical knowledge" and "a cultivated taste" and concluded that she was "awkward and ignorant" (123).⁸⁵ After the progressive demolition of her fame and literary capacities by Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Austen⁸⁶ and the Victorian critics, Radcliffe was also the target of negative

critiques in the twentieth century. MacCarthy, who had the pioneering merit of analysing the works of women novelists by defining their peculiarities and school of thoughts in a systematic way, claimed that Radcliffe's novels could not be considered important.⁸⁷ In spite of his fluctuating appreciation of Radcliffe, Scott recognizes that she is able to follow classical rules in her narrative as for example in *The Italian*: "Her art is at once, according to the classical precept, extorted and concealed in the beautiful and impressive passage, where the Marchesa is in the choir of the convent of San Nicolo⁸⁸, contriving with the atrocious Schedoni the murder of Ellena" (Scott 83). Interestingly, C. Johnson claims that Radcliffe's writings show a great erudition ranging from philosophy to aesthetics (76). The question is then to detect evident elements of her knowledge and discover from where she got her erudition and how she could know the classical canons if she had not received a classical education.

One answer can be provided by a series of recent full-scale investigations on a particularly important cultural issue. An aspect that has been long neglected in the history of literature is the centrality of literary translations, especially from Latin and Greek, in the propagation of culture and in the determinations of canons along the various epochs (Gillespie and Hopkins, Hopkins, Adam Rounce) and, in particular, during the "long" eighteenth century (Gillespie). Gillespie demonstrates that translations from the Classics became of crucial importance during the second half of the seventeenth century and the whole eighteenth century, as a consequence of the cultural impact brought about by Dryden's *Aeneid*⁸⁹ (1697), and Pope's *Iliad* (1715-20) and *Odyssey* (1725-26). Moreover, innumerable translations of Horace, Ovid, Statius and a

constellation of classical authors were carried out. As Gillespie puts it, “the scale and centrality of translations from ancient Latin and Greek works in the literature of the Anglophone world over the centuries” is of essential importance in the understanding of literary reception and subsequent literary production. He also argues that “in every phase of English literature, and for that matter many phases of other western literatures too, much of the innovative impulse comes directly or indirectly through translation from ancient Greek and Roman texts, and in some eras their impact is fundamental” (*English Translation and Classical Reception* 1-2).

P. Wilson explains that the variety of versions of Virgil’s works is remarkable: “There had been six complete translations of Virgil’s Eclogues before 1660, and Virgil’s exalted standing ensured that the years 1660-1790 saw many more, both in verse and in prose, often primarily intended for use in schools” (183). The complete *Georgics* were rendered by Dryden in 1697 and they “remained standard until the twentieth century” (Paul Davis 191). P. Wilson explains: “Two prose translations of the 1740s are worthy of note: James Hamilton’s was intended to raise a subscription to advance the arts of Scottish agriculture, and in that of John Martyn, Professor of Botany at Cambridge, the notes focus particularly on the accuracy of Virgil’s botanical details”. The availability of Virgilian examples was extended and suitable for a variety of readers, both erudite and less educated. The following extract taken from Virgil’s second book of the *Georgics* is one of the many example of botanical descriptions⁹⁰:

First, trees diversely rise: here native woods

Ov'rspread at will wide plains and mazy floods;
There the tall poplar towers, the broom extends,
O'er her dark bed the pliant osier bends,
And azure willows waving with the gale
Turn their hoar leaf, that silvers o'er the vale.
Some high in air from scatter'd seeds arise;
Hence the tall chestnut spreads her stately size,
Huge æsculus o'ershadowing all the grove,
And oaks that spoke to Greece the will of Jove,
Here self-form'd forests, gather round the root,
Thus branching elms and clustering cherries shoot,
And e'en the tender bay's Parnassian bloom
Springs up beneath its mother leafy gloom.
Thus varying nature first the desert crown'd,
And shrub, and grove, and forest rose around.⁹¹

(*Georgics* II, 11-26, 92-93)

Virgil unites scientific knowledge and poetic sensibility. He starts from a general vision of the “woods” then he directs his observations to the “plains” and “mazy floods”. He describes the varieties of trees and their qualities, the “tall poplar”, the “azure willow”, the stately-sized “chestnut”, the sacred “huge æsculus”, the “oaks”, the “the branching elm”, the “clustering cherries”, and the “green bay”, also known as the laurel. Like other passages in the *Georgics*, the scene is dominated by the prevalence of the colour green. The “seeds”, previously depicted by Lucretius, become the positive roots of nature. Trees can grow

spontaneously or be the result of men's hard work. Green is sprinkled everywhere and "shrub", "grove", and "forests" (line 26) fill the earth with their beauty. Unlike Lucretius, Virgil exalts the immanent presence of the divinity in nature, which the agent responsible for beauty. Virgil's masterpiece is peculiar because it concentrates on themes that uncommon at the time. Together with beautiful verses, the poet provides useful observations of nature and reveals secrets about agriculture. His text was always popular but became especially important in the eighteenth century when agriculture and landscape were the results of technical efforts meant to improve the land.

P. Wilson highlights that "the 1789s saw a spate of [Virgil's] new renderings by James Tytler, William Greene, and William Graham". Such an extraordinary amount of Virgilian material may have had an impact on Radcliffe, who actually mentions Virgil in her novels on various occasions. Virgil's major interest in nature, and his description of different samples of flora, found fertile ground in Britain where botany was becoming an important science. The varieties of trees and flowers were being used to change the landscape (Mavis Bathey, Cosgrove and Daniels).

Considering the vast panorama of classical works and their frequent translations, I would argue that they had an important didactic and cultural role. Translations helped women, who were not allowed to receive a classical and cultural education, to discover the Classics and be inspired by them in their writing. This idea can be extended to Radcliffe's case as well. With the exclusion of very rare exceptions, tutored by their fathers or relatives at home, young women did not have access to higher education, which was the monopoly of

men in British society. Education was intended to make men develop intellectually and acquire vast cultural knowledge, but was a sort of taboo for women, viewed as incompatible with propriety (Mary Poovey) and modesty (Sarah Annes Brown). Therefore, we may argue that Ann Radcliffe showed the enriching effects of the acquisition of classical Antiquity in her works through literary translations.⁹²

We can realistically argue that Radcliffe was able to catch up for the possible lack of a systematic education and that she managed to acquire cultivation through multiple sources that allowed her to obtain wider literary insight even though she had not received the rudiments of Greek and Latin, a characteristic that distinguishes her from either Beckford or Lewis, already imbibing the Classics since childhood. I would also argue, that she was more intellectually prepared than what was thought during the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Her writings show that she not only encountered various artistic expressions (that she learned to distinguish and appreciate) but also acquired genuine literary knowledge, which included classical, medieval, and Renaissance masterpieces. My claim is that her references to ancient authors in her four central novels are not accidental. It can be argued that the proven availability of an enormous number of translations⁹³ of classical authors were the basic factors that allowed Radcliffe to acquire wide knowledge. She could read masterpieces from Antiquity and absorb their poetical, intellectual and philosophical messages.

We may wonder why Radcliffe completely excluded the fashionable convention of Latin or Greek quotations from her epigraphs.⁹⁴ The use of Latin

(more rarely Greek) epigraphs from Horace, Ovid, Juvenal, Statius and others can be found in Steele, Addison, S. Johnson, and all major eighteenth century male authors. Lewis uses two examples from Horace (an aphorism and a poetic imitation) at the beginning of *The Monk*. I can embark on two hypotheses to clarify Radcliffe's choice: one may be motivated by gender conventions and the other one may represent a socio-cultural need. Universal recognition was accorded to a female writer insofar as she did not trespass into intellectual male territory. Using epigraphs from Latin or Greek authors may not have been appreciated by a male audience and could have provoked mockery, in case of misquotes, or strong criticism for an attitude that could be interpreted as daring.⁹⁵ So common and so popular in male poetry and prose, Horace was out of the question for his ironic and even libertine connotations. Quoting from the elegant but difficult Virgil or the daringly erotic Ovid was equally risky.⁹⁶ Lucretius could have been misinterpreted: only Beckford could venture to use the poet in his novel, in a strange prose narrative, outside a poetical context. The second reason may be connected to a form of respect for her female readership whose cultural level was not homogenous. As her reading public was supposedly mostly composed of women⁹⁷, she may have chosen not to use classical epigraphs in her novels to avoid pomposity or blue-stocking intellectualism. However, explicit references to the reading of Classics or the mention of great authors from Antiquity such as Homer, Virgil and Ovid are frequent in her text. I would argue that their presence is not fortuitous and conveys special meanings within the development of the plots that we are going to analyse.

3.11. Virgilian Idyllic: Pastoral, Bucolic and Sublime

The letters and anecdotes that S. Johnson published, impersonating Mr. Dubious, in *The Adventurer* were an intellectual *escamotage* to divulge cultural knowledge and spread rudiments on Latin classical authors, among others. Number ninety-two of the magazine was published on 22 September 1753. The article was called "Criticism on *The Pastorals* by Virgil" and highlighted the best qualities of the Virgilian text without hiding its somehow weaker aspects. It was unsurprisingly preceded by a couplet from Horace, one of the most revered Latin poets in the eighteenth century, introducing an aphorism on the important role of a literary critic: "Bold be the critick, zealous to his trust/ Like the firm judge inexorably just". The reason for systematically evaluating ancient authors and writing critical essays was dictated by S. Johnson's will to disseminate his classical knowledge and intervene in the dispute of 'The Ancients and The Moderns'. Started in France at the end of the seventeenth century with the intention of defining whether the true value of literary creation stood in the ancient models or in contemporary creations, the diatribe had spread to Britain.⁹⁸ S. Johnson writes a textual analysis of the Virgilian *Eclogues*, also known as *Bucolics* (42-38 BC), and quotes from Horace once more to inaugurate his review: "Horace justly declares, that the rural muses have appropriated to [Virgil] their elegance and sweetness" (69).

In a light, delicately ironical form, S. Johnson examines the ten *Eclogues* and carries out a literal and stylistic observation of the work.⁹⁹ The first and tenth *Eclogues* win his enthusiastic appreciation, particularly the first because it

“combines all the images of rural pleasures” (75). S. Johnson claims that the entire Virgilian work contains beautiful images: the tenth eclogue conveys “the idea of rural tranquillity” (74) while the third “is filled with images at once splendid and pleasing” (72). While not in the least diminishing the value of the poet, Dr. Johnson does not fully appreciate the second *Eclogue* for reasons that strangely sound more Romantic than Augustan: “I know not that it contains one affecting sentiment or pleasing description, or one passage that strikes the imagination or awakens the passions” (72). It is not far-fetched to argue that Ann Radcliffe was able to balance the apparent lack of Virgilian imagination with her narrative inventions a few decades later.

S. Johnson’s recognition, together with the growing number of translated versions of his masterpieces (Gillespie and Hopkins), turned Virgil’s works into essential instruments for a refined education - an example to be read, commented, imitated and, of course, translated, translation being the most popular tool in language teaching and learning at the time.¹⁰⁰ Of all the ancient poets both Greek and Latin that had extolled Nature, Virgil was the one who particularly exalted its beneficial and transcendent aspects, his spirituality being a prelude to the Christian age according to many of his commentators, among whom Dante was the most convinced. Virgil was younger than Lucretius, and he was one of the few poets that made reference to his predecessor and developed many of his intuitions about natural life.

His pastoral and bucolic images appear to have moulded Radcliffe’s description of nature. The *Romance of the Forest* features interesting passages

dedicated to a delicate nature. The following passage shows Adeline discovering ample landscape for the first time:

They entered upon a land confined by high banks and overarched by trees, on whose branches appeared the first green buds of spring glittering with dews. The fresh breeze of the morning animated the spirit of Adeline, whose mind was delicately sensible to the beauties of nature. As she viewed the flowery luxuriance of the turf, and the tender green of the trees, or caught between the opening banks, a glimpse of the varied landscape, rich with wood, and fading into blue and distant mountains¹⁰¹, her heart expanded in momentary joy. With Adeline the charms of external nature were heightened by those of novelty: she had seldom seen the grandeur of an extensive prospect, or the magnificence of a wide horizon- and not often the picturesque beauties of more confined scenery. (9)

Adeline has just been saved by De La Motte and has joined the gentleman and his family in their escape from Paris. Trying to get as far away from the capital as possible, they travel for days until they find a place that seems to emanate a magic quality. The analogy with Virgilian scenes is amazing, especially in consideration of the fact that the Latin poet exalts the power of spring with remarkable frequency.¹⁰² Some examples from the Georgics can help better understand the inner analogy between Virgil and Radcliffe:

While yet the Spring is young, while Earth unbinds
Her frozen Bosom to the Western Winds;
While Mountain Snows dissolve against the Sun,
And Streams, yet new, from Precipices run. (I: 63-66, 51)

When Winter's rage abates, when chearful Hours
Awake the Spring, and Spring awakes the Flow'rs,
On the green Turf thy careless Limbs display,
And celebrate the mighty Mother's day.
For then the Hills with pleasing Shades are crown'd (I: 462-466, 63)
The Spring adorns the Woods, renews the Leaves;
The Womb of Earth the genial Seed receives. (II: 437-48, 84)

The proximity between the Virgilian pastoral and bucolic descriptions of nature, and the Radcliffean exaltation of idyllic settings in nature, have somehow been detected but never deeply analysed, the tepid recognition of her classical aspect probably due to a non-systematic education. However, some crucial elements show how deep Radcliffe's classical knowledge was. Virgil's sensibility and his delicate poetic masterpieces seemed to perfectly suit Radcliffe's narrative style. The Latin poet was universally recognized as one of the greatest geniuses of Antiquity. Moreover, his works were not at risk of moral censorship as Virgil was not considered indecent or offensive on a par with Lucretius, Horace, Ovid and others.¹⁰³

One entry in Radcliffe's diary written in 1802 is fascinating and revealing. She was impressed when she visited Blenheim Castle but her descriptions often concern the surrounding gardens (the italics are mine):

This walk continues on the brow, for about half a mile, very sweetly, and leads to a sloping lawn shaded with the *noblest trees* in the garden. More struck with this spot than with any, except about the large lake. First, two *poplars* of most astonishing height [...]. At their feet, the light *green spray foliage* of these deciduous

cypresses had a most charming effect. Near the poplars, a lofty *plane* but inferior in height. Near this, a surprising Portugal *laurel* swept the ground, and spread to a vast circumference; a very extraordinary tree for size. (61-62)

The attention to the different families and kinds of trees denotes an interest in nature as well as a specialized botanical knowledge.¹⁰⁴ What is remarkable is that she starts from a general statement then proceeds to describe the trees. Even more astonishing is that she starts her list by mentioning the “poplar”. The poplar was the first tree described by Virgil in the passage analysed before. The way she describes the “noblest trees” denotes an admiration of the majestic in nature, which is connected with the exaltation of nature in the *Georgics* by Virgil - a work that Addison had qualified as “the most complete, elaborate, and finished piece of all Antiquity” (418). She also describes “the cypresses” equally mentioned by Virgil: “the cypresses of the Idæan height” (II: 105, 97).¹⁰⁵ Books I and II of the *Georgics*, in particular, contain various sections dedicated to descriptions of magnificent trees, which were also an inspiration for Thomson’s *The Seasons* and anticipated Radcliffe’s romantic passages. However, not all descriptions are idyllic. The following abstract is taken from Book One of the *Georgics*. The usual pastoral atmosphere is replaced by the terror created by sudden and frightful tempest:

Oft have I seen a sudden Storm arise,
From all the warring Winds that sweep the Skies:
The heavy Harvest from the Root is torn,
And whirl'd aloft the lighter Stubble born;
With such a force the flying rack is driv'n;

And such a Winter wears the face of Heav'n:
 And oft whole sheets descend of slucy Rain,
 Suck'd by the spongy Clouds from off the Main:
 The lofty Skies at once come pouring down,
 The promis'd Crop and golden Labours drown.
 The Dykes are fill'd, and with a roaring sound
 The rising Rivers float the nether ground;
 And Rocks the bellowing Voice of boiling Seas rebound.
 The Father of the Gods his Glory shrowds,
 Involv'd in Tempests, and a Night of Clouds.
 And from the middle Darkness flashing out,
 By fits he deals his fiery Bolts about.
 Earth feels the Motions of her angry God,
 Her Entrails tremble, and her Mountains nod;
 And flying Beasts in Forests seek abode:
 Deep horrour seizes ev'ry Humane Breast,
 Their Pride is humbled, and their Fear confess'd:
 While he from high his rowling Thunder throws,
 And fires the Mountains with repeated blows:
 The Rocks are from their old Foundations rent¹⁰⁶;
 (Book I: 430-454, 62-63)

The “lofty Skies”, the “roaring sound”, the “Night of Clouds” are phrases which will be absorbed by graveyards poets and Gothic authors. Its nightmarish scene, which “seizes” men’s souls with “Deep horror”, may have been described by Radcliffe herself. The image of the “warring Winds” is particularly important as it is reproduced in *The Romance of the Forest*. The terrible moment when the

Marquis de Montalt meets De La Motte in the abbey is characterized by the unchaining of a frightening storm - a harbinger of sombre events. Their dialogue is covered by the tempest's disquieting sounds. I selected some of the most interesting sentences connected with Virgil's description:

It happened one stormy night (...). The storm was now loud, and the hollow blasts, which rushed among the trees, prevented his distinguishing any other sound. (...) A loud gust of wind, that burst along the passage (...) overpowered his voice and that of the Marquis (...). The rising tempest again drowned the sound of their voices. (...) Nothing was to be seen through the darkness of the night – nothing heard but the howling of the storm (85-90).

De La Motte is shaken following the "impression of horror" (90) that he suffers during the terrible encounter in the middle of the furious blast.

The function of Virgil's *Georgics* is not only didascalical. Nor is it only an encyclopaedic appreciation of the gifts provided by agriculture through men's hard work and the beauties of nature.¹⁰⁷ It is also a form of adoration of the divinity immanent in nature. The love for bucolic scenes and the Virgilian appreciation of nature can be found in the following passage from Talfourd, where he stresses Radcliffe's capacity to distinguish different kinds of *flora*:

There was scarcely a tree of importance, with the peculiar form of which she was not familiar, and the varieties of whose aspects in light and shade she could not picture in words. With reference to their age and to the analogy she fancied the lines of monarchs, with which they might be coeval, she described the trees

separately as Plantagenet Oaks, Tudor beeches, or Stuart elms.

(97)

Radcliffe appears to have inherited from Virgil the sense of nature as a form of spirituality and religious sentiment. This feeling can be better felt and expressed when surrounded by trees and flowers and beautiful landscapes. The Virgilian contrast between the corrupting urban life and the spiritual life in the countryside is mirrored at the very beginning of *The Romance of the Forest*; it is the *leitmotiv* at the centre of the entire novel. If De La Motte has fallen into vice and has become a worse man, it is because he has succumbed to the innumerable temptations that were offered to him in the corrupted city. However, when he lets nature enter his soul as he enters the forest, he momentarily becomes a different person while admiring the beauty surrounding him:

In the mean time he spent the anxious interval of Peter's absence in examining the ruin, and walking over the environs; they were sweetly romantic, and the luxuriant woods, with which they abounded, seemed to sequester this spot from the rest of the world. Frequently natural vista would yield a view of the country, terminated by hills, which retiring in distance, faded into the blue horizon. A stream, various and musical in its course, wound at the foot of the lawn, on which stood the abbey; here it silently glided beneath the shades, feeding the flowers that bloomed on its banks, and diffusing dewy freshness around; there it spread in broad expanse to-day, reflecting the sylvan scene, and the wild deer that tasted its waves (23).

The enchanting effect of nature is powerful and can alter a person of dubious morals such as De La Motte. The bucolic surrounding conveys moments of serenity for the anguished character that appears to have forgotten the evils haunting his mind. Radcliffe has borrowed from the Virgilian lines to complete the appeasing description of the landscape. Unlike De La Motte, La Luc is the quintessential pastoral ideal of a man who has never abandoned nature and has remained honest and pure, in the constant adoration of nature, which every day is offered to him and his equally upright family in Savoy. The life in the city and the apparent progress of mankind are a source of anguish for Virgil who pessimistically knows that the world is heading towards destruction because of people's desire for power and their blind need for war.¹⁰⁸ The dichotomy of urban vivacity versus rural life also characterizes *The Mysteries of Udolpho*: the lavish and sumptuous attractions of a city like Venice hide hypocrisy and crime embodied in Montoni, whereas the simplicity of St. Aubert's life in the countryside is a model of ethical conduct. The bucolic atmosphere of the landscape near the Pyrenees resembles a Virgilian idyll and is the ideal *locus* of Nature's purity, exalted by the Latin poet and deeply admired by Radcliffe. Nature's quintessence is in its immense variety and breath-taking beauty: "these tremendous precipices were contrasted by the soft green of the pastures and woods that hung upon their skirts; among whose flocks, and herds, and simple cottages, the eye, after having scaled the cliffs above, delighted to repose" (*Mysteries of Udolpho* 5).

One very important aspect in the *Georgics* is the narrating voice, who is suffering for the loss of his property after the unjust confiscations of his beloved

land, a theme which is replicated in Radcliffe, who shows a further strong analogy with both Virgil's themes and sensibility. The unjustified and undeserved loss of property oppresses all Radcliffe's main characters. Moreover, the theme of loss, exile and nostalgia in the tenth *Eclogue* is variously reproduced in Radcliffe's novels where the characters, forced to abandon their place of origin, express their chagrin while observing their lost source of joy, and they repeat Virgil's original lament:

We leave our country's bounds,
Our much-lov'd plains;
We from our country fly, unhappy swains
(*Eclogues* I, 3-5)

Madame De La Motte and Adeline express a similar sentiment while leaving the places of their lost happiness; the same feeling is expressed by Emily in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, and Ellena in *The Italian*.¹⁰⁹ The exile of the just unjustly tormented can be referred to Adeline. De La Motte is desperate as well because he has to abandon everything for the mistakes he has made. Interestingly, the second Book of the *Georgics* mentions the escape of a man who is not pure and can never be satisfied.¹¹⁰

Although more rarely, Virgil offers images of terror when he describes ghosts infesting the earth after abominable crimes have been committed. The next passage (lines 476-480), from the First Book of the *Georgics*, powerfully demonstrates this:

Yea, and by many through the breathless groves
A voice was heard with power, and wondrous-pale
Phantoms were seen upon the dusk of night,

And cattle spake, portentous! streams stand still,
And the earth yawns asunder, ivory weeps
For sorrow in the shrines, and bronzes sweat.

The supernatural events, whether they are visions or reality, threaten and frighten because they become the testimony of a monstrous crime - the assassination of Caesar. *The Romance of the Forest* presents mysterious phenomena as an omen of crimes that were committed and are to be revealed. After flying away from the capital and rescuing the beautiful Adeline, De La Motte, now hidden inside the impenetrable forest, is exploring the ruins of the abbey where he and his family are seeking refuge:

[De La Motte] was proceeding when he was interrupted by an uncommon noise which passed along the hall. They were all silent – it was the silence of terror (...). Across the hall, the greater part of which was concealed in shadow, the feeble ray spread a tremulous gleam, exhibiting the chasm in the roof, while many nameless objects were seen imperfectly through the dusk (...). If spirits were ever permitted to revisit the earth, this seemed the hour and the place most suitable for their appearance. [Adeline] was interrupted by a return of the noise. (18-9)

Virgil's "voice" is transformed into the mysterious "noise" pervading the ruins of the abbey. The Virgilian "phantoms (...) in the dusk of night" become Adeline's murdered father's tormented spirit appearing at night, coming back to reveal a hideous crime.

Like Beckford and Lewis, Radcliffe frequently inserts classical echoes. Her sensibility is in unison with Virgil as they both love serene landscapes, even

though they introduce horror scenes. Various parts of the novel show Virgilian influences profusely. Nevertheless, Radcliffe introduces also other classical authors who become dominant in one of the most alluring and at the same time most problematic episodes of the story. In fact, one of Radcliffe's narrative climaxes corresponds to a complex classical moment in *The Romance of the Forest*, when Adeline's story has taken a strange turn. Kidnapped in the middle of the wood by means of a cruel stratagem, she is taken to a sumptuous building. She is then brought inside a majestic room, "splendidly illuminated", with "a silver lamp of Etruscan form".¹¹¹ The lamp "diffused a blaze of light, that, reflected from large pier glasses, completely illuminated the saloon" (*Romance of the Forest* 156). The luminosity of the scene is in contrast with the dark, gloomy and frightening ruins¹¹² where she had taken refuge with the La Motte family. The new place she has time to observe is enriched with precious decorations, beautiful paintings, "sofas of silk, Etruscan vases", classical statues, and sensual frescoes all over the walls. The mysterious place "seemed the works of enchantment"¹¹³ and rather resembled the palace of a fairy than any human conformation" (156). Surrounded by artificial light, the protagonist has been taken away from her Virgilian idyll in the middle of the mysterious forest. Now, she is immersed into an atmosphere of exaggerated luxury and sensuality. It is not a coincidence that Virgil is not mentioned in the passage and his absence is not coincidental, compared to the presence of other classical poets populating the scene. Adeline could observe visual representations from Ovid¹¹⁴ on the wall. She can admire "busts of Horace¹¹⁵, Ovid¹¹⁶, Anacreon¹¹⁷, Tibullus¹¹⁸ and Petronius¹¹⁹ Arbiter". Adeline recognizes that the paintings and frescoes narrate

stories taken from the sensual poet Ovid. However, she does not describe the images for the implicit understanding of their strong sexual nature. The author of the *Art of Love* (*Ars Amandi* written in 2AD) and *Love Affairs* (*Amores* published in 15 BC), Ovid's fame rests on his masterpiece *The Metamorphoses*, a mythological and symbolic cosmogony followed by the history of humanity. Stories of tragic loves and cruel seductions follow one after the other. The introduction of representations of Ovid's stories is a clear signal. The house is a place dedicated to love and seduction. Adeline faces a terrible danger. In spite of the nature of the paintings, Adeline remains strangely calm. Her Virgilian idyllic personality cannot be tainted by the tragic Ovidian passions.

The presence of the poets and writers in Montalt's "saloon", used for cajolery, is an exaltation of sensuality and eroticism which is linked to his character. He is a refined aesthete and an elegant seducer, but his cruelty has not been revealed yet. Montalt's love for Adeline is passionate and carnal, which makes him appear as a hedonist. His love is like a fire that consumes him from the very first moment he meets her. Like Montalt, Louis and Theodore were mesmerized by her presence and felt the same ardour for Adeline. It is like the flame that Virgil describes in the third book of the *Georgics*, as the natural process in nature, and that Lucretius graphically depicted with all its physical and sensual effects.¹²⁰ However, this apparently inoffensive personality hides a dangerous mask. This artificial *persona* is going to be replaced by a different self. He abandons his sensuality and reveals his true ego. Montalt becomes an unscrupulous murderer in the second part of the novel. The metamorphosis, which generally involves the victims of the seduction in Ovid, is in this case

reversed. It is the seducer himself that changes whereas the victim is not contaminated or changed. I would highlight that Adeline acquires the status of a superior being, a sort of goddess, which is confirmed in the description of her person, when she is compared to a mythological being.

The motif of sylvan nymphs is often present in Virgil's *Georgics* and *Eclogues*. These creatures move in the most beautiful spots of nature living in harmony. Coincidentally, Adeline is described as particularly beautiful; "her figure of the middling size, and turned to the most exquisite proportion; her hair was dark auburn, her eyes blue, and whether they sparkled with intelligence, or melted with tenderness, they were equally attractive: her form had the airy lightness of a nymph, and, when she smiled, her countenance might have been drawn for the younger sister of Hebe" (29). Adeline is compared to mythological characters: the nymphs that live in the forests and the goddess Hebe, one of Aphrodite's sisters and the symbol of eternal youth. I would argue that Radcliffe's insistence on classical details is not casual but systematic. By using classical comparisons and contexts, she does not only want to be creative, but also aims at giving literary *gravitas* to her writing.

A further important idea is provided by Matthew Wickman. He posited that the dichotomy between the narrative devices of horror and terror that so much interested Ann Radcliffe was a direct inheritance from Antiquity and, in particular, from Virgil (187). I would claim that Radcliffe took both categories to perfection, consciously imitating and developing classical canons. Reversing David Durant's claim that "Mrs. Radcliffe made her heroines discover a nightmare beneath the pastoral" (523), I would rather argue that her female

characters are helped by the pastoral to overcome the Gothic ordeal they face. It is possible to infer from the patterns we have presented in this section that classical authors and in particular Virgil had an important function in *The Romance of the Forest*. This function could be easily extended to her other works.

3.12. Ariosto's Angelica and Female Sublimation

That Ariosto, and Tasso, played a role in the creation of her works can be posited as indisputable.¹²¹ When Talfourd describes the high praises her works received from her contemporaries, he reveals that even a severe critic such as Joseph Thomas Mathias (1754-1838)¹²² acclaimed her as “the mighty magician, bred and nourished by the Florentine muses in their sacred, solitary caverns” (Talfourd 12). Mathias compared Radcliffe to one of the damsels, “Damigella Trivulzia”, chanted by Ludovico Ariosto in the final canto of his *Orlando Furioso*.

Notwithstanding some critics' claims that she lacked knowledge, Ann Radcliffe variously demonstrated that she not only knew the Classics well but that she had also read the geniuses of Italian literature as well. Her husband knew French and Italian and might have helped her. It is likely that she had access to the translations of the Italian authors that were published with remarkable frequency during the entire eighteenth century (Gillespie and Hopkins, Norton, Battaglia). Translations of Ludovico Ariosto and Torquato Tasso were relatively easy to find. John Hoole (1727-1803) translated *Jerusalem Delivered* in 1763. He published *Orlando Furioso* in 1783, in an adorned edition of

five volumes.¹²³ They contained illustrations by Bertolazzi and Angelica Kaufmann.

Some operas by Handel that Radcliffe particularly enjoyed were based on Ariosto and Tasso's imagery. The analogies with the poets have been underlined by a number of critics¹²⁴ and the presence of the Italian authors from the Renaissance and post-Renaissance can be found directly in the pages of her novels. When Adeline is safe in Savoy, she discovers her new friend Clara's cultural accomplishments: "From being delighted with the observance of nature, [Clara] grew pleased with seeing her finely imitated, and soon displayed a taste for poetry and painting. When she was about sixteen she often selected from her father's library those of the Italian poets¹²⁵ most celebrated for picturesque beauty and would spend the first hours of morning in reading them under the shade of the acacias that bordered the lake" (*The Romance of the Forest* 249). The bucolic context at La Luc's is also an Arcadia of poetry and art.

It can be argued that the extravagant, complicated imagery in *Orlando Furioso* has influenced a large number of works until the present day.¹²⁶ Radcliffe's two central narratives, *The Romance of the Forest* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, introduce many elements that echo Ariosto. The setting and the context of the first part of *The Romance of The Forest* with its development within an intricate beautiful forest, which seems enchanted and where time has apparently stopped, recalls Ariosto's magic atmospheres that can be found throughout the poem. The initial stanzas XII and XIII of the First Canto illustrate the typical natural environment:

- XII The warrior knew, and, while yet distant, scanned
The angelic features and the gentle air
Which long had held him fast in Cupid's snare.
- XIII The affrighted damsel turns her palfrey round,
And shakes the floating bridle in the wind;
Nor in her panic seeks to choose her ground,
Nor open grove prefers to thicket blind.
But reckless, pale and trembling, and astound,
Leaves to her horse the devious way to find.
He up and down the forest bore the dame,
Till to a sylvan river's bank he came.

The forest is the idyllic place where love explodes and incredible adventures take place. From the very beginning, the setting that Ariosto chooses is nature and many scenes develop within luxuriant woods or enchanted groves. The presence of Angelica is in harmony with the surrounding nature, which seems to highlight her beauty. Actually, the fascination of the woodland is exalted by Angelica's presence while she is wandering or riding within it. She can be compared to a superior being that transmits her charm to the surrounding world. At the same time, her beauty seems to be sublimated by the natural context. The young woman's inescapable attraction becomes a destiny for every man she meets. The abbey where Adeline and the others take refuge is surrounded by a forest that transmits a supernatural impression.¹²⁷ It is inside the forest that Theodore meets Adeline and falls in love with her. Also De La Motte, his son Louis, and Montalt are bewitched by Adeline in the proximity of nature.

Adeline is Angelica's alter ego, who subjugates every man with her beauty.¹²⁸ C. Johnson highlights that Adeline's grace virtually attracts all of the male characters in the story.¹²⁹ One clear example can be found when the fugitive De La Motte, frightened and exhausted, is suddenly captivated by her beauty:

Her features were bathed in tears, and she seemed to suffer the utmost distress. (...) He now seized the trembling hand of the girl, who shrunk aghast with terror, and hurried her towards La Motte, whom surprise still kept silent. She sunk at his feet, and with supplicating eyes, that streamed with tears, implored him to have pity on her. Notwithstanding his present agitation, he found it impossible to contemplate the beauty and distress of the object before him with indifference. Her youth, her apparent innocence- the artless energy of her manner forcibly assailed his heart. (...) La Motte raised the lovely girl from the floor (...). Her features, which were delicately beautiful, had gained from distress an expression of captivating sweetness (...). A habit of grey camlet, with short slashed sleeves, shewed, but did not adorn her figure: it was thrown open at the bosom, upon which her hair had fallen in disorder. He determined to protect her (6-8).

De La Motte suddenly changes when faced with Adeline's superior beauty. Depicted as a cynic, who was tempted by intrigue and vice, he now succumbs to Adeline's charms and forgets the danger of being arrested. It is as if time had stopped. The usually cold and indifferent gentleman is captured by the girl's charms that Radcliffe describes from a special narrative perspective- a particular

point of view that has been defined as a “male gaze”. This is Adeline’s first appearance in the novel and her charming presence has an immediate impact on the other characters. Even the cruel *banditti* cannot resist her and they decide not to commit any crime against her. It is possible to argue that Adeline’s appearance intensifies the sweetness of her character and the aesthetic relevance of her persona. From the very beginning, it is clear that Adeline is a charmer. The *banditti* do not dare to hurt her; the amoral De La Motte instantly becomes a paladin for the girl; and when his son Louis discovers their hiding place in the abbey, he falls for her at once. After the enraged Marquis de Montalt discovers that De La Motte is hiding in his property, he suddenly forgets his cruel intentions because he is enamoured of Adeline. One of his soldiers, Theodore, swears to be her protector after falling in love at first sight. Adeline’s charm never diminishes. Even the good reverend La Luc, old and weak, finds the strength to accompany her on a long journey in search of Theodore. Her seductive qualities, very similar to Angelica’s, are confirmed near the end of the story as well:

When she appeared before the tribunal, Adeline’s emotion surpassed all the arts of disguise (...) She attracted the universal pity and admiration of the assembly. (...) She immediately threw herself at the feet of the monarch in behalf of Theodore and De La Motte. (...) The monarch would have granted his pardon to a pleader less irresistible than Adeline. (...) The passion which Louis had so long owned for Adeline was raised almost to adoration.

(351-354)

Adeline is Ariosto's Angelica. Angelica conquers every heart but in the end prefers the knight Medoro, inferior in rank, to all of the other Paladins, Princes and Kings that had tried to seduce her. Adeline's situation reflects Angelica's: "Her affection for Theodore had induced Adeline to reject several suitors which her goodness, beauty and wealth, had already attracted, and whom, though infinitely his superiors in point of fortune, were many of them inferior to him in family, and all of them in merit" (356).

However, I would like to highlight that Adeline is not only beautiful but is also astute enough to kindly reject Montalt's dangerous love. "Montalt's household is a sex palace where, with genteel erotica, aphrodisiac collations of confections, ices, and liquors, and a bevy of depraved demoiselles, he urges Adeline to succumb to his passion. All men in the novel act according the suggestions of their feelings" (C. Johnson 45). What Radcliffe calls "Montalt's saloon", which is full of "enchantment", seems to be the work of fairies and Adeline can feel a persistent form of magic, which is never rationalized or negated. The magic performed by the wizard Atlante in *Orlando Furioso*, and the sortilege created by the sorceress Armida in *Jerusalem Delivered*, are at work in the context we have observed. Montalt's house of seduction contains Renaissance enchantment, and it is under the sign of Classicism, for the multiple references to Latin and Greek authors. Adeline is similar to Angelica when she tries to escape the consequences of her irresistible charm. In the following stanzas from the first Canto, Angelica casually meets Sacripant, one of the many unfortunate noblemen in love with her; in spite of her disdain and her technique at keeping all suitors at a distance, she egoistically accepts his help:

49 With deep attention, while the warrior weeps,
She marks the fashion of the grief and tears
And words of him, whose passion never sleeps;
Nor this the first confession which she hears.
But with his plaint her heart no measure keeps,
Cold as the column which the builder rears.
Like haughty maid, who holds herself above
The world, and deems none worthy of her love.
50 But her from harm amid those woods to keep,
The damsel weened she might his guidance need;

Like Angelica, Adeline uses survival strategies to protect herself from the Marquis: "A little reflection shewed Adeline the danger of exasperating his pride, by an avowal of the contempt which his pretended offer of marriage excited; and she thought it not improper, upon an occasion in which the honour and peace of her life was concerned, to yield somewhat to the policy of dissimulation. She saw that her only chance of escaping his designs depended upon delaying them" (159). A strange mixture of innocence and cunning, Adeline uses Angelica's stratagems. The analogies, both physical and psychological, between Angelica and Adelina are significant. Angelica moves alone within the dangerous context of the war between Charlemagne and the Moorish army. Her extraordinary beauty puts her at even greater danger of being abducted and raped but she manages to escape from the most horrible situations. She is also aware of her beauty that she uses to her advantage. The extremely young and inexperienced Adeline moves in a male-dominated world with great self-assurance and, like Angelica, promptly reacts to dangerous predicaments.

We may therefore argue that *The Romance of the Forest* offers a double parallel or even triple reading of its plot. The story of Adeline is a Gothic narrative among picturesque landscapes and sublime ruins. It is a classical narration with Virgilian bucolic and pastoral moments alternating with potentially tragic situations. It is finally a timid and lyrical representation of the chivalric adventure of an extraordinary girl of supreme beauty.

I would argue that Adelina is assertive and, like Angelica, chooses the man she desires rather than the one that convention may impose on her. Ann Radcliffe's real revolutionary message may correspond to the unconventional statement by the paladin Rinaldo that does not accept the unjust differences between a woman and a man in social conventions:

Say why shall woman — merit scathe or blame,
Though lovers, one or more, she may caress;
While man to sin with whom he will is free,
And meets with praise, not mere impunity

(Orlando Furioso Canto IV, Stanza 56)

3.13. Iconographies in *The Romance of the Forest*

The works by painters, engravers, illustrators, draughtsman and topographers such as Thomas Hearne (1744-1817), William Watts (1752-1851) and Jacob Schnebbelie (1760-1792) reproduced monuments, archaeological sites, ruins and landscapes as well as famous paintings. Picturesque theorist Gilpin was a watercolourist and published the images of the locations he had visited, thus spreading the fashion of the picturesque among his contemporaries (Lévy 213). The dissemination of engravings and illustrations was enhanced by

printing through a number of publishers. Also cultural societies, among which *The Royal Society of Antiquaries* of London, were instrumental in their large diffusion and consequent accessibility to a wider public. Bookshops, such as the *Temple of the Muses* owned by the bookseller and publisher James Lackington, further contributed to the discovery and propagation of visual arts that reproduced an enormous variety of places, either real or imaginary.

Discerning the inspirational iconography in Ann Radcliffe's stories is complicated for the vagueness that characterizes her innumerable descriptions of geographies and architectures. Some critics do not think her descriptions correspond to real places. Being an art lover and connoisseur, she might have taken inspiration from visual arts. A number of British painters, illustrators and architects reproduced distant landscapes, especially Italian ones that they had created during their artistic apprenticeships and cultural exchanges in Italy. Wright of Derby and R. Wilson amply copied sceneries of the places where they long sojourned, contributing to picturesque visions of Italy and the South of the Continent. The etching made from one of R. Wilson's scenes (1778), in the *Royal Academy*, is entitled *Solitude* and features a thick luxuriant forest, where different kinds of trees can be admired. They reflect in the lake water, which is crystal clear. Two small characters are in the foreground, apparently reading. The atmosphere is serene and recalls the forest described in Radcliffe's novel.

Terry Castle argues that Radcliffe's landscapes are scattered with interior images that became equivalent to ghostly presences in her various architectures. Jayne Lewis borrows ideas from Aline Grant's 1952 biography of Radcliffe and claims that the writer's "characters move through canvases" she

probably saw “with her husband during visits to the *Royal Academy*”. She adds that Radcliffe, by using quite a limited spectrum of colours, often exploited indefinite images to turn her panoramas into vague landscapes filtered by haze (377-9). I would assert that, more than canvases, it was likely a number of etchings and engravings that Radcliffe could have observed at the *Royal Academy* that had been established in 1761. Its art collections included original and copies from famous painters and engravers such as Piranesi, Poussin, Gaspar Dughet, Lorrain and R. Wilson. Dughet (1615-1675), Poussin’s brother in law, who was born and lived in Italy his whole life, “was enamoured of untamed nature, which he painted from life in a manner more realistic and less laden with symbols than the grandiose and pantheistic nature of his brother-in-law” (Pierre Rosenberg and Marc Fumaroli 162). Dughet was highly appreciated and often imitated, thus it was difficult to distinguish the original from the imitation. His paintings were in great fashion in eighteenth-century Britain and were frequently reproduced in black and white etchings and engravings. His landscapes are luxuriant and nature is the dominant aspect, which surrounds mythological or pastoral beings in the technique of *staffage*, which was widely used by Lorrain (1600-1682) and Poussin (1694-1665) as well. The painting attributed to Dughet (National Trust Collections) depicts a *Landscape with a Storm*. The colours of the rich foliage and the cloudy sky are transfigured by the violence of the storm. Trees are blown by a furious wind. Dangerous lightning appears through the dark frightening clouds. Some small figures in the foreground show their distress while they proceed with difficulty along the path. The atmosphere is in contrast with the early peaceful moments that Adeline, De La Motte and his wife enjoy,

protected by a benevolent nature. The image is related to the fearful moments when a horrible storm has unchained, accompanying Montalt and De La Motte's fatal meeting with its disheartening sounds.

Poussin spent some years in Italy where he met the young Duguet. An appreciated painter mostly famous for his historical and mythological representations, Poussin's landscapes and *staffage* tend to reproduce the seventeenth-century Dutch mode in landscape. However, he added a special touch of luminosity in his panoramic descriptions. One of his paintings of the Garden of Eden, entitled *Spring*, could well represent a bucolic scenery in Radcliffe's novel:

The first tender tints of morning now appeared on the verge of the horizon, stealing upon the darkness – so pure, so, fine, so ethereal it seemed as if Heaven was opening to the view. (...) meanwhile in the east, become more vivid, darting a trembling lustre far around, till a ruddy glow, which fired all the part of the Heavens, announced the rising sun. At first, a small line of inconceivable splendour emerged on the horizon, which, quickly expanding, the sun appeared in all his glory, unveiling the whole face of nature vivifying every colour of landscape, and sprinkling the dewy earth with glittering light. The low and gentle responses of birds, awakened by the morning ray, now broke the silence of the hour. (*Romance of the Forest* 22)

Salvator Rosa's (1615-1673) sublime scenes show an alluring but threatening Nature. He influenced Radcliffe's darkest narrations of beautiful sublime and latent horror. The sources of Radcliffe's eidetic imagery may be as innumerable

as possible, but she gives some clues when she openly declares her admiration for Rosa, Poussin and Claude's paintings. One tranquil scene by Salvator Rosa shows a peaceful landscape. It depicts, however, a tragic story from *The Metamorphoses*.

Images of anguish in the abbey ruins may be found in Piranesi's etchings. Greatly appreciated by a British group of painters and architects during their stays in Rome, he sent copies of his works to England where he was appointed an Honorary Member of the *Society of Antiquaries*. His labyrinthine *Ruins of Maecenas' Villa* and the ruins of *Castello dell'Acqua Giulia* could respectively represent an inspiration for the abbey in *The Romance of the Forest*.

On a visit to Belvedere house in 1805, Ann Radcliffe noted in her diary the different styles of the mansion: "the Grecian portico", "The French grey stucco" (64) and enumerated some of the most important paintings that she was able to admire. She mentions the Italian Canaletto, the English Reynolds, the Dutch Rembrandt and Teniers, and "an exquisite *Campagna di Roma* by Claude" (Talfourd 65). The description of the painting is detailed and highlights Radcliffe's deep appreciation of art:

The sight of this picture imparted much of the luxurious repose and satisfaction, which we derive from contemplating the finest scenes of Nature. Here was the port, as well as the painter, touching the imagination and making you see more than the picture contained. You saw the real light of the sun, you breathed the air of the country, you felt all the circumstances of a luxurious climate on the most serene and beautiful landscape; and, the mind being thus softened, you almost fancied you heard Italian

music on the air – the music of Paisiello¹³⁰; and such, doubtless, were the scenes that inspired him.

Radcliffe's awareness of visual arts is akin to Beckford's aesthetic appreciation that he demonstrated by collecting a huge amount of paintings. In this sense, both authors seem much more sensitive to the attraction of iconographies and artistic images than Lewis, who does not indulge in the description of nature or places, with the exception of allegorical *ekphrasis* which are connected to a dramatic development in the plot.

Although it is difficult to identify the literary sources for the vast descriptions in her novels, whether of distant geographies, of luxuriant landscapes, of horrid mansions or sublime ruins, it is possible to surmise that she was able to apply a personal syncretism of various authors and artists that she blended to create a form of visual-writing which she inherited from the masters of colours.¹³¹

2.14. A Final Meditation on Radcliffe

The writer's emphasis on natural settings is quite strong, and is present in all of her works.¹³² Her journeys into the mysteries of ancient buildings and the beauty of nature seem to create a contrast with a lurking undefined oppression. Virgil's exaltation of the love of nature is an essential theme for Radcliffe as well, which can be found in her novels in general and is clearly uttered in *The Romance of the Forest*.

The political revolutions, which had taken place in the United States and in France between the 1770s and the 1790s changed the common perspective on the real meaning of power and government. Yet Radcliffe does not acknowledge

the existence of political or social turmoil. When her stories introduce conflicts, they concern a distant past and are not historically identifiable, as for example in *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* or in the *Mysteries of Udolpho*. The former introduces the struggle between ancient Scottish clans, which are limited to the main characters of the story and their two families, whereas the latter mentions *condottieri* in a post-Renaissance Italy who turn out to be more similar to *banditti* than honourable knights.

My hypothesis is that Ann Radcliffe was not primarily interested in politics or in the contemporary events, or at least she did not want to express an opinion either in favour or against. Her plots underline the importance of individual struggles and the single character's capacity to face the unpredictable and negative events of life. The anachronisms that many critics find in her stories are not due to a lack of historical knowledge but represent Radcliffe's refusal to describe and judge contemporary historical events. I would argue that her apparent imprecisions have the function to juxtapose her stories with moral fables and fairy tales where innocent and good-hearted protagonists must fight against evil agency unjustly intruding in their lives.¹³³

Radcliffe's real interest lies elsewhere. Her plots, especially the ones in her four central novels, reveal a form of latent rejection, not systematically organized, against what was apparently threatening nature. What Radcliffe repeatedly introduces are primordial natural settings with no trace of industrial revolution. It can be argued that the author showed a proto-awareness of environmental problems. She is strangely silent about the social transformations brought about by the industrial revolution. Yet, she probably had the chance to

learn how the new techniques of manufacturing were changing thanks to her connection to the Bentley & Wedgwood factories.

I would posit that her novels demonstrate that she had acquired remarkable cultural knowledge, which she was anxious to transmit. At the same time she desired to see her literary merits recognized. Miles claims that she was endowed with “narrative sophistication” that can be detected in *The Romance of the Forest*. (*The Great Enchantress* 111). It may be argued that the novel is an example of technical perfection, where Gothic themes are interspersed with important classic Virgilian evocations and chivalric atmospheres inherited from Ariosto. Also, she had a meta-literary consciousness, which is expressed in a few lines at the beginning of the action when De La Motte thinks that “the savage manners of the inhabitants [of the house], seemed to him like a romance of imagination” (7); “He ruminated on the late scene, and it appeared like a vision, of one improbable fictions that sometimes are exhibited to a *romance*: he could reduce it to no principle of probability or render it comprehensible by any endeavour to analyse it”(8). We might say that her complexity was relevant and that she showed unexpected post-modern irony before its time.

Wright of Derby created a gloomy and romantic painting of the poet’s sepulchre. It is the words in Trapp’s poem, dedicated to Virgil, that seem to be the best to reproduce Radcliffe’s works’ deeper meaning:

T’was such a scene as gave a kind relief

To memory, in sweet pensive grief (271).

¹ Byron was ambiguous in his critical judgment about Radcliffe - a fact that did not prevent him from copying themes and images from her novels. Norton posits that the characterization of probably Radcliffe's most powerful character, Schedoni, musing about his crimes, may have influenced Byron. On his part, the poet recognized the impression received from Radcliffe's description of Venice in *Childe Herold's Pilgrimage* (1812). When he published *Lara* (1814), critics almost unanimously remarked that his work was not distant from plagiarism (Rogers *Ann Radcliffe, A Bio-bibliography* 55).

² Wordsworth abundantly used images taken from Ann Radcliffe's works but was reluctant to admit borrowing from the authoress he had harshly, though indirectly, criticized in his "Preface to *The Lyrical Ballads*" (1800). Coleridge had mixed feelings about her creations, a fact that did not prevent him from using and adapting imagery from her *repertoire*. Scott, who defined her the "Mighty Enchantress" and was influenced by her works in his *Waverley* Novels, had expressed an unfavourable opinion on the writer which he later amended (Talfourd 99). Shelley, Mary Shelley and John Keats were more sincere in their admiration for Radcliffe and were outspoken in admitting her great influence on their works. A clear example is the definition of "Mother Radcliffe" in Keats's private correspondence to George and Georgiana Keats to acknowledge her influence in the creation of some of his poems (Battaglia 7). Thomas De Quincey dubbed her "the Great Enchantress of that generation" in his work *Confessions of an Opium-Eater* (Norton 7). Concerning the eclipse that progressively obscured her fame starting from the mid-nineteenth century, Rogers claims, like several other critics, that the oblivion and the indifference persisted for quite a long time, passing from the nineteenth century to the twentieth, with the exception of the studies and essays by three women: Clara McIntyre, who wrote her analysis of Radcliffe's critical reception in 1920, Alida Wieten, who examined the works of Ann Radcliffe (1926), and Aline Grant, who wrote an interesting biography in 1951 (*The Matrophobic Gothic and its Legacy* 46). Rogers posits that *The Gothic Flame* (1966) by Devendra Varma was the turning point in Radcliffe's evaluation.

³ Ann Radcliffe's husband had carefully monitored the composition of his wife's uneventful life and was probably responsible for the final editing. William Radcliffe's attitude is similar to Alexander Brunton, Mary Brunton's husband and John Doyle, Susan Ferrier's grandnephew: "relatives play the role of protector while exposing the humdrum life, almost devoid of interest, of women involved in the unedifying occupation of writing fiction" (Andrew Monnickendam 64).

⁴ It is dialogue between two characters, one of whom has the didactic role of explaining the function of terror and sublime in literature to the other, who represents the sceptical voice of a less attentive reader. This cultural meditation on the narrative techniques of terror should have been published together with the memoir and her last novel. It appeared in the *New Monthly Magazine* in 1826 instead (Townshend and Wright).

⁵ Rogers provides a series of real documents concerning her last days that include her diary and her doctor's testimony on her illness and medications. These details have been obsessively examined by critics such as Rogers, Norton and other biographers in order to find important details to counter balance the lack of information on the writer.

⁶ Accurate details are provided by Rogers in all three of her works dedicated to the writer. They show that Radcliffe was amply translated all over Europe.

⁷ The information is provided by Talfourd, Scott and Kavanagh. Scott's biographical account of Radcliffe is moulded on Talfourd's memoir to which he is indebted for the majority of his biographical details. All data concerning her life have been collected and investigated by Rogers and Norton. Their studies are among the most comprehensive scholarly works on Radcliffe.

⁸ Bentley was an enlightened intellectual with interests in art, philosophy, literature and politics. He invited academics, politicians, philosophers, architects, painters, musicians and writers to his house and Ann could meet them even though she was particularly shy - a characteristic that defined her personality for all her "retired and sequestered" life (Scott 38).

⁹ At twenty-three, she married William Radcliffe, a journalist of the same age. Radcliffe had abandoned his studies at Cambridge, moved to Oxford where he had taken a Degree in Law and become a parliamentary reporter for *The Gazetteer* in London. After the first two years of marriage and many hours of solitude for her husband's absence, she published her first novel *The Castles of Athlin and Dunbayne* (1789), which was followed by *A Sicilian Romance* (1790).

¹⁰ William Radcliffe abandoned his job at the *Gazetteer* and became part-owner and journalist of the *Morning Chronicle*. Fame and money were accompanied by a good deal of envy and the huge sums (£500 and £800) did not pass unperceived. In fact, the couple were the talk of the day, as is demonstrated by Norton. He cast light on many behind-the-scenes reactions by people who were astonished, such as William Godwin's (1756-1836) friend, the antiquarian Joseph Ritson, and Dr. Charles Burney, who revealed the entirety of the sum to his daughter Fanny. Fanny Burney was "indignant as being paid so little in comparison" (96). She also wrote that she should be writing Gothic novels to earn more money. She actually started the novel *Camilla*, a semi-Gothic story that was published in the same year as *The Monk*.

¹¹ In 1795 a travel journal was published: *A Journey Made in the Summer of 1794, through Holland and the Western Frontier of Germany, With a Return Down the Rhine: To Which Are Added Observations During a Tour to the Lakes of Lancashire and Westmoreland, and Cumberland*. According to Norton, Radcliffe's husband "took a self-effacing role when he contributed to [it]" (65). Scott provided a fictitious chronology about this journey and the dates of publication in his biography. His aim was to show that the detailed descriptions of mysterious mansions, castles and dungeons had been influenced by her journeys around England and in Germany. Scott's anachronisms are not confirmed in any of her various biographers.

¹² Notwithstanding her popularity, her aversion to publicity progressively transformed her into a rather mysterious recluse "Secluded as Mrs. Radcliffe was from the world, she was tremblingly alive to every circumstance which could, by the remotest possibility, raise an inference injurious to the personal character she valued far above literary fame; and, as nothing could induce her to appear before the public, everything of this nature preyed long upon her mind" (Talfourd 90).

¹³ Talfourd explains that "Mrs. Radcliffe continued her little diary of [her] pleasant roving, but without the slightest idea of publication, from which she generally shrunk as evil" (15). Apart from sporadic travel journals and diaries, with little or no personal information and some poems (Lévy, Norton, Battaglia), she apparently did not write, or did not want to write. Talfourd justifies her rejection of writing: "In Romance, she probably felt she had done enough; and, feeling it impossible to surpass her *Mysteries of Udolpho* and her *Italian*, declined again to subject herself to criticism by publication. Though gratified by a sense of the enjoyment she had provided for multitudes, and justly proud of the honest and blameless means by which it was produced, she rarely alluded to her novels" (89). Anna Laetitia Barbauld (1743-1825) felt that in *The Italian* "Mrs Radcliffe had taken her peculiar art as far as it could go", and after portraying "the horrors of the Inquisition, the next step could only have been a portrayal of Hell, which she shrank back from" (Norton 136). The American critic Bridget MacCarthy gives a very practical opinion: "Her public had grown weary of being tricked by false alarms and criticism became more audible. Furthermore the market was flooded by an immense crowd of imitators, who fastened only on such sensational parts of Mrs. Radcliffe's technique as were imitable" (414). A hypothesis that has been vented is that the relationship that the public perceived between her works and Matthew Lewis's *The Monk* was disturbing to her. With the exception of the letter addressed to her mother-in-law, found in 2014, there are no records of any correspondence or diary bearing her name. It is not actually clear when she wrote her last novel *Gaston de Blondville* (1826) and her essay "On the Supernatural" (1826). The memoir states that she wrote them in 1802 and this date is unanimously accepted by virtually all critics in her biographies. However, the only source of information was William Radcliffe, who may have destroyed everything that he did not want the public to know. The inexplicable change of style and tone in the last novel could lead to the conclusion that she did not actually write it or, if she did, she may have written the story together with her husband. Another conjecture could be that she may have experimented new forms of narrations. Milbank carries out a comparative analysis between *Gaston de Blondville* and *A Sicilian Romance* while Ellis completely ignores the text in his study of Radcliffe's works. An anonymous *Ode to Terror*, ridiculing the taste for exaggerated gloomy atmospheres in Ann Radcliffe's novels, was written in 1810 as a grotesque dedication to the writer, rumoured to have died. The second was an anonymous unauthorized publication of poems

from her novels in 1815, which may have been secretly approved by William Radcliffe for economic reasons (Lévy).

¹⁴ The concentration of *romances*, tales of horror, and stories of ghosts set in mysterious castles and frightening abbeys between the 1790s and the first decade of the nineteenth century is astonishingly high. Many of them were published by the Minerva Press. There were also chapbooks or bluebooks. Unknown as well as popular authors exploited the frenzy for Gothic mysteries. Matthew Lewis published collections of romantic tales and horror narratives that he had translated or adapted from previous stories or foreign authors (*The Bravo of Venice*, 1805; *The Wood Daemon, or the Clock has struck*, 1807; *Romantic Tales*, 1808). William Godwin published a historical Gothic story (*St. Leon, A Tale of the Sixteenth Century*, 1799). John Moore, who had become famous publishing *Zeluco* in 1789, turned to Gothic (*Grasville Abbey: a Romance*, 1797; *The Heirs of Villeroy. A Romance*, 1806). Sophia Lee wrote a horror story (*Almeyda; Queen of Granada*, 1797). Eliza Fenwick, famous for her children's books, experimented the Gothic genre (*Secrecy, or the Ruin of the Rock*, 1795). Some women writers acquired notoriety at the turn of the century thanks to their Gothic novels and romances, in imitation of Radcliffe and Lewis: such as Regina Maria Roche (*Clermont. A Tale*, 1798; *Nocturnal Visit. A Tale*, 1800); Marianne Dacre (*Confessions of the Nun of St. Omer*, 1805; *Zofloya*, 1806), and Mary (also known as Mrs.) Meeke, who was particularly prolific, as she published several formulaic novels at the turn of the century (*The Abbey of Clugny*, 1795; *Count Saint Blanchard*, 1796; *The Sicilian*, 1797). Eliza Parsons turned to Gothic to face her financial problems (*The Castle of Wolfenbach*, 1793; *The Mysterious Warning*, 1796; *The Valley of Saint Gotthard*, 1799). A versatile novelist, Francis Lathom published Gothic stories full of blood and horror, where the supernatural is explained as in Radcliffe (*The Castle of Ollada*, 1795; *The Midnight Bell*, 1798; *Mystery. A Novel*, 1800; *The Fatal Vow*, 1807). Mary Ann Radcliffe exploited her surname, and Radcliffe's silence, to publish novels of terror that may have attracted readers for their Radcliffian themes (*The Veiled Picture, or the Mysteries of Gorgono*, 1802; *Manfroné: or, the One-handed Monk*, 1809). An Eliza Radcliffe published a single novel: *The Mysterious Baron*, 1808. Henry Mackenzie, an otherwise sentimental author, wrote the terror novel *The Neapolitan*, 1796. About forty anonymous Gothic novels and romances were published between 1797 and 1807. Louisa Stanhope, Sarah Wilkinson, Mrs. R.M.P. Yorke, and William Ireland wrote a profusion of terror and horror stories in the first decade of the nineteenth century. A myriad of authors (many of them used pseudonyms or pennames) produced Gothic literature. Here is a selection of some names: Elisabeth Bonhote, James Norris Brewer, Mary Charlton, Harriet Chilcot, Hannah Cowley, Luke Connolly, Isaac Crookenden (chapbooks), Horsley Curties, Jane Elson, Joseph Fox, Sophia Frances, Emilia Grosett, Ann Mary Hamilton, Jane Harvey, Elisabeth Helme, Isabella Kelly, Ann Ker, John Palmer, Charles Lucas, Henrietta Mosse, Joshua Pickersgill, Ann Maria Porter, Catherine Selden, Henry Siddons, George Walker. For further information, see: Peter Garside, James Raven, and Rainer Schöwerling, eds, *The English Novel 1770-1829*. Radcliffe's contemporary critics' rejection of Gothic may have been justifiable, after all.

¹⁵ In 1882 Cristina Rossetti wrote to her brother that she was trying to "radcliffize" (cited in Norton 5) in order to discover as much as possible for her biography about Ann Radcliffe. She had attempted to unveil mysteries that were still lingering over the writer, but she had to abandon the project.

¹⁶ Her biographer's difficulties are explained in a letter dated 4 March 1826 written by Mary Russell Mitford to reverend William Harness. She had described Talfourd's problem with Mr. Radcliffe (Battaglia 41, cited in Norton as well).

¹⁷ Radcliffe's last years were surrounded by mystery. The cause of her death was attributed to asthma but she had been probably suffering from a lung infection (Rogers *Ann Radcliffe, Bio-bibliography*). Battaglia embraces the idea that her husband may have masterminded her life in solitude, provoking her depression. He may be responsible for her premature death. He actually administered the prescriptions that perhaps accelerated her final crisis. Finally, the fact that he married the French governess after just a few months may be considered unusual. Moreover, the couple went to live in Paris and he left her a legacy of £ 80.000 when he died, only seven years after his wife. These strange coincidences may be considered as further evidence against William Radcliffe, in Battaglia's opinion. Interestingly, *The Guardian* reported "a chance discovery in an archive of an extraordinarily rare letter by the queen of Gothic fiction" addressed to her mother-in-law, which seems to prove that family relationships were tense

(The article is dated Thursday 30 January 2014, 16.15 GMT). Before this discovery only two manuscripts existed in Ann Radcliffe's hand. Greg Buzwell, a curator at the British Library in London, came across the letter in a volume of miscellaneous letters. The date only mentions the day and the month "but Buzwell suspects it was written in 1797", the year of the publication of *The Italian*. He ironically argues that the story of Ellena de Rosalba and the cruel Marchesa de Vivaldi, her future mother-in-law in the novel, may have been inspired by her situation in real life.

¹⁸ A major issue in Radcliffe's criticism is either the adoption of an impersonal Freudian, Lacanian or Foucauldian stance for interpretation. Examples can be found in Williams (*Art of Darkness*), Rogers (*The Matrophobic Gothic*) Miles, and in the work of Byron, Punter, and Townshend among others. Their textual analyses of her works are based on general psychological or sociological standards. Other critics tend to recognize psychoanalytical aspects. After Talfourd, McIntyre, A. Grant, Pierre Arnaud, Lévy, Battaglia and Norton used psychoanalytical interpretations. Her plots have been interpreted as a mirror of possible painful personal experiences and/or hidden confessions. Duncan perceives a dualism within Radcliffe's Gothic that he defines "alien", and "domestic" while Napier underlines that "the urge to stabilize" (9), is present in Radcliffe, creating a "tonal imbalance" (67). More detached textual analyses can be found in Clery, Chard, J. Howard and Milbank, who examine her texts with the focus on technical aspects.

¹⁹ "With respect to sentimental stories, and books of mere entertainment, we must remark, that they should be sparingly used, especially in the education of girls. This species of reading cultivates what is called the heart prematurely, lowers the tone of the mind, and induces indifference for those common pleasures and occupations, which, however trivial in themselves, constitute by far the greatest portion of our daily happiness" (23).

²⁰ Talfourd described an episode that revealed one of her contemporaries' opinions, which were rather unflattering. When Archibald Constable published *Letters of Anna Seward* in 1811, two years after the poetess had died, it turned out that her correspondence contained opinions concerning *The Plays of Passion*. In a letter dated 21 May 1799, Seward's analysis of the plays, wrongly attributed to Radcliffe, and actually written by Joanna Baillie, was negative to the extreme: "Mrs. Radcliffe, in whatever she writes, attentive solely to the end, is not sufficiently attentive to observe probability in the means she uses to attain it. She bends her plan – or, if it will not bend, she breaks it, to her catastrophe, by making it grow out of the preceding events" (Talfourd 91). Radcliffe "was deeply affected". It is likely that such an outspoken opinion in Seward's correspondence offended Radcliffe by virtue of the fact she had honoured Seward by citing some of her verses. She had used some lines from Seward's poem ("Monody on Major André") as an introduction to Chapter XX in *The Romance of the Forest*: "and venom'd with disgrace the dark of Death" (*Romance of the Forest* 307). In 1794, Seward admits that she does not approve of "the novel trash of the day (...) but Radcliffe is worthwhile in spite of the superabundance of descriptions" (Rogers, *Ann Radcliffe, Bio-bibliography* 41). However, more careful analysis in Seward's private commentaries demonstrates that she had a blunt opinion of Radcliffe's works: "One has heard of a labouring mountain bringing forth a mouse: in Mrs. Radcliffe's writings mice bring forth mountains" (Rogers *Bio-bibliography* 48).

²¹ Scott claimed that she had "a talent and a taste for the wild, romantic, and mysterious", her main characteristic being "the exuberance and fertility of imagination" (42). Mrs. Radcliffe's originality comprised "a tone of fanciful description and impressive narrative, which had hitherto exclusively applied to poetry" (43). However, his definition of her typical readers is not particularly exalting when he specifies that her novels are appreciated "in the dwelling of the lonely invalid, or neglected votary of celibacy, who was bewitched away from a sense of indisposition, of the neglect of the world, or of secret sorrow" (48).

²² A similar strategy had been used, and in fact introduced, by Smith who selected less effective pieces of poetry. However, the invention of this literary device is attributed to Ann Radcliffe: "Charlotte Smith, Radcliffe's respected contemporary, also included poetry in her novels, but it is in Radcliffe particularly that verse is important both as expressive of individual feeling and as part of a claim for high literary status for novel" (Milbank 204).

²³ The structure of Radcliffe's biography by Scott is characterized by a strange form of alternating judgment which recalls the litotes structure in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, particularly in the speech of Marcus Antonius, who, while exalting Brutus's honour, is actually exhorting the Roman people to consider him a murderer. In fact, after mentioning the writer's quality, Scott ambiguously states that "the perusal of [Radcliffe's] such works may, without injustice, be compared to the use of opiates, baneful, when habitually and constantly resorted to" (48). He highlights Ann Radcliffe's merit of having created a new form of *romance* but then he specifies that "[t]he species of romance which Mrs. Radcliffe introduced bears nearly the same relation to the novel that the modern anomaly entitled a melodrama does to the proper drama" (66). He continues by saying that after receiving public applause "the criticism with which she was assailed was the more invidious, that it was inflicted, in more than one case, by persons of genius, who followed the same pursuit with herself: it was the cry, at the period, and has sometimes been repeated since, that the romances of Mrs. Radcliffe, and the applause with which they were received, were evil signs of the times, and argued a great and increasing degradation of the public taste ..." (69-70). Analysing the supernatural shown in the *Ghost-seer* by Schiller, where impostures and superstitions are found to be perpetrated by "Rosicrucians and Illuminati", he finds that "Mrs. Radcliffe has not had recourse to so artificial a solution. Her heroines often sustain the agony of fear, and her readers that of suspense, from incidents which, when explained, appear of an ordinary and trivial nature; and in that we do not greatly applaud her art" (80). In the conclusion, the litotes structure is even more apparent. While unwilling to conclude the biography with a "depreciating sentiment", Scott states "that Mrs. Radcliffe rather walks in fairy land than in the region of realities, and that she has neither displayed the command of the human passions, nor the insight into the human heart, nor the observation of life and manners, which recommend other authors in the same line. But she has taken the lead in a line of composition" (100). Rhetorical devices, unpromising reviews, more or less understated negative opinions by Wordsworth, Coleridge and Scott, as well as ironical remarks in Jane Austen's novels (*Emma*, *Northanger Abbey*), may have contributed to the progressive decline of her literary reputation in the decades to come.

²⁴ They also reveal that her obituaries demonstrated consideration for her works. In 1826, *The New Monthly Magazine* stated that Ann Radcliffe's achievements were less strange than Walpole's and less insipid than Clara Reeve's (J. Watt 102).

²⁵ The reviews published in 1792 praised her literary genius in unison: "Everything is consistent and within the verge of rational belief." *The Critical Review*, New Ar., IV (1792), 458; "Of modern novels, *The Romance of the Forest* must certainly be allowed to rank among the first class." *The English Review*, XX (1792), 352; "We have seldom met with a fiction that has more forcibly fixed the attention, or more agreeably interested the feelings throughout the whole narrative." *The Monthly Review*, VIII (1792), 82 (Lévy 245). Lévy claims that it was this novel that suddenly gave an acceleration to the Gothic, after two decades of sporadic creativity in the *genre* after Walpole.

²⁶ Moers' influential *Literary Women* focused on nineteenth-century female writers. Its chapter on "Female Gothic" was a turning point in the critical analysis of Radcliffe. She was taken as the prototype of distinctive female writing - an idea developed by Fleenor in more extreme terms as she unites feminist ideas with psychoanalytical interpretations: "The Gothic and [...] female experiences have a common schizophrenia" (28) provoked by patriarchal paradigms.

²⁷ In a way, her writing is a sort of compromise between the positivity of rationalism, the languor of sentimentalism, the extremes of Gothic fiction and the passionate expressions of Romanticism. Poovey claims that "Radcliffe investigates the paradoxical role sensibility plays in simultaneously restricting women and providing them power and an arena for action ("Ideology and *The Mysteries of Udolpho* 119).

²⁸ Talfourd included a brief survey on *romance* in the memoir dedicated to Radcliffe. "Mrs. Radcliffe can fairly be considered as the inventor of a new style or *romance*; equally distinct from the old tales of chivalry and magic, and from modern representations of credible incidents and living manners. Her works partially exhibit the charms of each species of composition; interweaving the miraculous with the probable, in consistent narrative, and breathing of tenderness and beauty peculiarly her own" (106).

Margaret Baron Wilson sketched a very short story of *romance* in her biography of Matthew G. Lewis. Interestingly, one century before, Dryden considered *romance* as a “fib”.

²⁹ It might be interesting to notice that all of her novels without exception are defined by the term *romance*, which always follows the title in the frontispieces.

³⁰ Unlike the majority of critics, Summers seemed to enjoy this particular and, in many cases, unnerving technique: “The reader experiences in perfection the strange luxury of artificial terror without being obliged to hoodwink his reason or to yield to the weakness of superstitious credulity” (133).

³¹ Ann Radcliffe’s plots featuring young and innocent heroines who, in spite of being surrounded by dangers, manage to overcome all problems, have often been interpreted as symbolic. The constant risk of sexual assault is handled by the young characters notwithstanding their sense of horror when in danger. The figure of the young persecuted woman has been seen as forms of frustrated female desire or incestuous desire. DeLamotte, who finds analogies between Richardson’s *Clarissa* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, claims that the special capacity for self-defence is what makes Radcliffe’s female protagonists different from Richardson’s *Clarissa* (32).

³² David Sandner finds incongruence about the supernatural in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* as well: “Radcliffe’s explanations attempt to domesticate the supernatural, but her inadequate explanations leave the job half finished” (93).

³³ The effusions of affection between the long lost mother Olivia, segregated in a convent, and the emotional daughter Ellena are seen as clear signs of sexual attachment in the mother/daughter relationship. The identification of the possible attachment, love, desire in the mother/daughter relationship is totally rejected in Clare Kahane’s interpretation of the mother seen as a cruel antagonist (see chapter on *The Monk*).

³⁴ The masquerade of a woman writer was immoderately ironic and the excesses of language highlight Beckford’s intellectuality mixed with scorn for women writers, as can be seen in the following passage taken from the exordium in volume I: “The narrator of the adventures of juvenile humanity finds less of labyrinthine involutions in the eccentricities of accumulated improbabilities, less of indescribability in the multifarious camelionity of terraqueous variety, or in the revolutionary scenery of planetary evolution, than dismaying-incomprehensibility in the enfoldings and vicissitudes of the involucrum of the pericardic region. The wildest wonder of imagination, astonishing agglomeration of concatenated rotation, fade into imperceptible invisibility, when opposed to the prevaricating pertinacity, which inoculates perspective projects on what is prohibited, and launches with extended velocity on a chaotic vaguosity of oceanic indistinction, unfathomable, ungovernable, and uncontrollable” (*Azemia* x-xi). From the first chapter, the text becomes sensational and unequivocally represents a parody of Radcliffe’s novels (and Charlotte Smith’s, too) to which Beckford adds political satire: “In the bosom of the respectable haram of Hamet-beig her father, and in the imperial city of Constantinople, was born and nurtured the beauteous Azemia – educated would be an improper word, for the advantages of education are to the Turkish virgin denied: but Nature had denied none of her most attractive gifts to Azemia” (1-2). The heroine is an uncultivated beauty. Beckford aimed to stress that what he thought of female protagonists was a *mélange* of exalting good looks and abysmal ignorance - an idea shared by opinionated critics and literates.

³⁵ Beckford and Radcliffe present many differences that are due to their social status and to the different education they received. She was struggling daily to fit into the role of the “proper woman”, afraid that even her most innocent words might be misunderstood as inadequate and improper. The definition of “proper woman”, introduced by Poovey, included all the rigid conventions women had to honour in order to be considered respectable and acceptable for society, even more when they decided to go public by writing essays and novels (Poovey x). In 1788, the French philosopher and writer Condorcet (1743-1794) was one of the few remarking that every sort of constraint was created for women to better control every sphere of their lives. On the contrary, Beckford was passing from one scandal to the other and left the country any time the situation would otherwise get him into legal trouble, to launch himself into equally adventurous and risky exploits abroad. In 1783, Beckford described his adventures on the Continent in

Dreams, Waking Thoughts and Incidents, a book that he was forced to burn because of family pressure. Only a few copies were saved. The book was changed by Beckford himself fifty years later and published as *Italy, with Sketches of Spain and Portugal* (Attilio Brilli 344-346).

³⁶ There are some exceptions. One concerns De La Motte. In order to increase the level of suspense, Radcliffe makes the readers observe the scenes through the character's eye when he is afraid of a *banditti* ambush. Another example is when Louis La Motte muses about his father's strange behaviour. Or when Madame De La Motte observes the encounter between Montalt and her husband.

³⁷ A thriller-like situation with a restricted point of view is when De la Motte starts his solitary exploration of the abbey.

³⁸ Chard argues that "the reader is implicitly invited to scrutinize her through the eyes of a male spectator" and also that "Adeline's appearance [serves] to display her body to particular advantage for pleasure of the spectator, since they allow the usual requirements of decorum to be cast aside" (xvii).

³⁹ In Radcliffe, the male protagonists shows higher or lower levels of sensibility but the characterization of goodness is always positive: the more men are sensitive the less they are tempted by vice and crime.

⁴⁰ *Eloisa to Abelard*, lines 1-4 (1717) by Pope. The epistle was written in heroic couplets following the Ovidian style. The gloomy and melancholy images of the dark cells are an anticipation of themes that would be absorbed and amplified by Gothic writers some five or six decades later. Summers was the first to notice the analogy in his *Gothic Quest*. Williams further develops this intuition to demonstrate that *The Castle of Otranto* (1764) was not a "parthenogenesis" (*Art of Darkness* 49), or the unprecedented creation of a new form of literature never existed before. To demonstrate the debt towards Pope and his Gothic feature, Williams cites Walpole's words in a letter to Sir Horace Mann, where he described the progress in the building of Strawberry Hill, on 12 June 1753: "My house is so monastic, that I have a little hall decked with long saints in lean arched windows and with taper columns, which we call the Paraclete, in memory of Eloise's cloister" (50).

⁴¹ Thomson imitated Milton and Spenser in *The Seasons* and in *The Castle of Indolence*. Virgil's influence is present in both works. *The Seasons* in particular was almost an imitation of the *Georgics* with panegyrics of country life, interspersed with tones of proud admiration for technological advancement, inherited from Newton (Sambrook xiii). Meditations on the changes of nature could be found in Goldsmith's *The Traveller* and Smith's *The Wealth of Nations*, with incompatible opposing points of view. Thompson enjoyed lasting fame starting from his contemporaries until the end of the Victorian period: "Tobias Smollett similarly opined that Thomson was 'one of those happy poets, whose writings inspired personal love and esteem (...)' Dr. Johnson thought that the most striking quality of Thomson's poetry was its fine-grained perception, such that the most mundane objects were illuminated in a strikingly original light; Joseph Warton also noticed Thomson's remarkable capacity for visualization". However, Thomson was the object of pungent criticism as well: "John Pinkerton objected to his convoluted syntax; William Hazlitt (1778-1830) did not think he could string two good ideas together" (Sebastian Mitchell 11)

⁴² "Liberal, not lavish, is kind Nature's hand;/Nor was perfection made for man below./Yet all her schemes with nicest art are plann'd,/Good counteracting ill, and gladness wo". (*The Minstrel*, lines 71-74). The poem was written in 1774 in imitation of Spenserian stanzas, which were derived from Italian versification. The composition, presenting bucolic images of nature, was appreciated by Dr. Johnson.

⁴³ The contrast between darkness and light is a common binary context in the novels by Radcliffe and in the literary and philosophical achievements of the Eighteenth Century. The most important events in her four central novels take place at night or when characters are surrounded by darkness.

⁴⁴ The possibility that German literature may have influenced Radcliffe is remote. On a rare social occasion when she and her husband met a journalist in 1821, she apparently said that she loved Friedrich Schiller's *The Ghost Seer* (cited in Rogers and Norton). However, the casual statement cannot be taken indiscriminately as a confirmation of her love of German literature. Moreover, German authors are not

mentioned in her novels. J.M. Tompkins added an unconvincing appendix on Radcliffe to the second edition of *The Popular Novel in Britain*, where one short passage from Schiller was included to show an analogy with a couple of sentences from Radcliffe (Tompkins was self-contradicting her previous statements on the writer as an original genius). In his *Gothic Quest*, originally written in the 1930s, Summers was the first scholar to carry out a systematic effort to define the genesis and the development of the Gothic. He dedicated his attention to its potential sources and to the works of the German authors who were increasingly translated during the very last years of the eighteenth century. Summers posits that the influence, that German sources that seemed to play upon a number authors of later Gothic tradition, were actually felt by the British public to be “unpatriotic, blasphemous and unhealthy”. Norton even reverses the myth of the German influence by claiming that it was Ann Radcliffe’s style that actually influenced the translators of German authors into English. It may seem plausible to argue that the impact of German authors was not completely absorbed by the English literary scene.

⁴⁵ Even though he did not specifically mention Ann Radcliffe’s name, Walpole admitted knowing about the Gothic development in novels in a letter to Lady Ossory, written in 1794: “I have read some of the descriptive verbose tales, of which Your Ladyship says I was the patriarch by several mothers. All I can say for myself, is that I do not think my concubines have produced issue more natural for excluding the aid of anything marvellous” (Rogers *Ann Radcliffe, Bio-Bibliography* 38).

⁴⁶ There is no trace of epigraphs in the posthumous *Gaston de Blondville*. The only personal convention Ann Radcliffe maintained (provided that she actually wrote it) is the introduction of poetic passages in some chapters.

⁴⁷ C. Johnson considers the three epigraphs from *Macbeth* as an instruction to read the story as a duplication of the tragedy. However, the reference to *Macbeth* in the three distinct epigraphs, each introducing a volume, concerns past actions, which took place before the actual beginning of the story. Other critics generally interpret these epigraphs as a clear manifesto of the chapter and /or novel intrinsic meaning. However, my suggestion is that epigraphs should not be taken literally. A similar case is Milbank’s definition of *A Sicilian Romance* as “a version of *Hamlet* without the supernatural” (200), which is a forced interpretation of the Shakespearean epigraph at the *incipit* of the action.

⁴⁸ The extracts from her travel journals published posthumously further confirm her adoration for the great playwright: “Many of the ruinous precipices of the upper cliffs project in horizontal strata, yet have perpendicular rents. Some of the shattered masses give most clear echoes: we stood before one, which repeated every syllable of several passages from the most sonorous languages, with an exactness of tone that was truly astonishing. It seemed as if a living spirit was in the rock, so near so loud, and so exact! ‘Speak on Horatio!’ I could have listened to it for hours. How solemn is the voice of cliffs and seas!” (Talfourd 80). Radcliffe deeply revered William Shakespeare and she can recognize his voice in nature’s most extreme manifestations.

⁴⁹ The Shakespearean works she mentions are: *Hamlet, Macbeth, Julius Caesar, Midsummer’s Night Dream, Romeo and Juliet, Titus Andronicus, King John, Richard II, Anthony and Cleopatra, Twelfth Night, As You like It, Measure for Measure, The Tempest*. A general tendency in critics is to focus on *Hamlet* and *Macbeth* for the interpretation.

⁵⁰ As she does not insert any piece of poem, or sonnet or ballad in her last novel within any of the chapters, we may infer that the two poetical compositions could belong to her. If this hypothesis were correct, we may see a form of literary self-fashioning, a proud confirmation of her cultural and literary awareness, and a need to distance herself from other contemporary authors.

⁵¹ Radcliffe’s attention to interactions in society may be taken from Rousseau’s ideas. C. Johnson maintains that Radcliffe introduces a form of “bland Rousseauism” in *The Romance of the Forest* more than in her other novels, that could not in any case represent a danger for public opinion, rather touchy about French philosophers after 1789. It is likely that Ann Radcliffe was influenced by Rousseau’s romantic ideals and the sentimental exaltation of his later works, especially *Julie, or The New Heloise* (1761), an epistolary novel, which features a Petrarchan message of love.

⁵² Starting from Ben Jonson's claim on the potential challenge to the "authority of the poet from the Italianate masque designs (...) Dennis argued that the 'pernicious' consequence of Italian opera was that poetry (and, by a circuitous connection, liberty) had effectively been driven out of the country. Dennis claimed that the Italian opera was 'a mere sensual Delight, utterly incapable of informing of the Understanding, or reforming the Will, and for that very reason utterly unfit to be made a public Diversion'. Xenophobic disdain for the spectacle of opera was reformulated in various ways throughout the century" (Shearer West "Manufacturing Spectacle" 295). In spite of Dennis' ideas, expressed in his *Essay on the Operas after the Italian Manner* (1706), this kind of musical/theatrical works continued to be extremely popular.

⁵³ "For my own part who can now no longer build *châteaux* even *en Espagne*. I find that Mombray Castle, Grasmere Abbey, The Castle of Rock-March, the castle of Hauteville, and Rayland Hall, have taken so many of my materials to construct, that I hardly have a watch tower, a Gothic arch, a cedar parlour, or a long gallery, an illuminated window, or a ruined chapel, left to help myself.... But my ingenious contemporaries have fully possessed themselves of every bastion and buttress – of every tower and turret- of every gallery and gateway, together with all their furniture and ivy mantles, and mossy battlements; tapestry, and old pictures, owls, bats and taverns..."(iii-iv). Through the irony of the passage, Smith is mocking her contemporary writers. The passage also introduces the sense of Smith's powerlessness facing forms of multiple plagiarisms of her original ideas. Mathias recognized the genius in Charlotte Smith. However, her revolutionary comments on the social situation, similar in spirit to Mary Wollstonecraft's outcry denouncing injustice against women, was not particularly appreciated by an increasingly conservative reading public, frightened by the excesses of the French Revolution.

⁵⁴ Ferguson Ellis belongs to the group of critics who interpret the castle as the symbol of the dramatic struggle of women imprisoned in patriarchal structures. On the other hand, C. Johnson is part of that minority of critics who rejects social analyses or the psychoanalytical interpretation of the castle as "an inward landscape sealed off from history" representing unresolved anxieties and traumas. On the contrary, she sees architectures as "actual, material features of the European countryside inscribing the still surviving feudal past" (76), which are connected with the objective preoccupation of property and inheritance.

⁵⁵ We pass from an undefined style to a perfect crystal clear image of the abode. De La Motte's residence and Adeline's monastery in Paris are blurred by the characters' hurry to leave them. We find the description of the little house in the country, centre of danger but also of salvation. The abbey and the ruin in the middle of the mysterious forest become the *locus* of the narrative universe. In the second part of the story, we can admire La Luc's modest castle in the mountains of Savoy, after the fortunate escape from Montalt's mansion (which may be a villa or a castle but it is never completely described). Finally the *château* in the Alps becomes the blissful place where the protagonists prepare to live (apparently) in harmony and joy.

⁵⁶ The most difficult moments in the story suggest more genuine fear and suspense than terror even though the danger for the characters is concrete. It is true that tones are softer than in the typical Gothic visualizations of violence and danger. An example can be found in the episode describing gentlemen, incarcerated for debts, who are shown inside a pre-revolutionary Bastille: the description does not transmit any sense of dark oppression that could be found in the real-life violence of the revolutionary attack to the power instead. Picturesque, Sublime, Terror and Horror are included in the story with a balanced distribution. The meeting with a deer in the cloister is picturesque. The descriptions of the forest's mystery are sublime. The abbey's labyrinths inspire feelings of terror whereas the discovery of the skeleton and the story of the murder provide elements of horror.

⁵⁷ "The Picturesque has often been considered as a safe middle ground, a compromise category, happily mediating the dangerous Burkean opposites of the Sublime and the Beautiful. It has been thought of as offering a particularly English aesthetic of landscape and even as playing a formative role in the construction of a particular kind of Englishness" (John Whale 176-7). Radcliffe is perhaps the only author who succeeded in using both aesthetic categories within a single work. Stephen Copley and Peter Garside

consider that the "Picturesque is a difficult category to define. (...) Offered by its original proponents as a third category to set against Burke's 'Sublime' and 'Beautiful', it also plays an important part, directly or by default, in the definition of the 'Gothic' and the 'Romantic' (1). They argue that "the Picturesque has [acquired] ideological implications in more recent critiques" (3). Punter claims that a precise idea of what the Picturesque is can be found in Alexander Pope's lines on *Windsor Forest* ("The Picturesque and the Sublime" 225).

⁵⁸ One of the first women to inaugurate the Grand Tour and the journey to Italy was Hester Lynch Piozzi on the occasion of her second marriage to an Italian music teacher. The records of her experience were collected in *Observations and Reflections made in the Course of a Journey through France, Italy and Germany* (1789) - a text that became popular in her intellectual circle and probably attracted Ann Radcliffe's interest. Mrs Piozzi, who remained in Italy for two years, offered long descriptions of landscapes and towns even though frequently dressed with patronizing attitudes towards the country. Surprisingly, "she gushes over 'the unrivalled powers of the divine Guercino', the 'wonders of the Carracci School' and passes by the architectural monuments of Pisa and Milan with no special comment" (Von Klenze 52).

⁵⁹ The definition for *lazzaroni* provided by the *Merriam Webster Dictionary*: "a *lazzarone* (plural *lazzaroni*) was an idler living on begging in Naples". The *Collins English Dictionary* definition is slightly different: "(in Naples) a homeless person who lives by begging or by doing odd jobs".

⁶⁰ Aristocratic women travelled as well but did not write their memories as frequently as men. Some "prominent women went to the Continent" and apparently committed "sexual improprieties" (Susan Lamb 352, Note 2). For the Grand Tour in Italy and the British Abroad, see Brillì, *Il Viaggio in Italia* and Jeremy Black, *Italy and the Grand Tour* as well as *The British Abroad: The Grand Tour in the Eighteenth Century*.

⁶¹ Francis Bacon had underlined the pedagogical value of travelling abroad in the sixteenth century; he was among the group of those who were positively impressed by this opportunity. However, many more writers were against travelling to the Continent and especially to Italy. Roger Asham was probably the initiator of the "Italophobic" attitude in 1570. In 1592, he was followed by Thomas Nashe who considered Italy as "the academy of murder" by stressing the analogies between Machiavellian Italians and the Elizabethan theatrical villains. Bishop Joseph Hall claimed in 1617 that journeys to Italy were not really necessary. In 1670, Richard Lassels was warning parents about the risks of visiting Italy. In his *Thoughts concerning Education* of 1693, Locke expressed a favourable opinion about journeys to Italy provided that they were not made at a young age. The vignettes described by Smollett showed sordid individuals of all kinds on the peninsula whereas A. Smith claimed that Italy turned young sensible Englishmen into madcap hedonists. Bishop Richard Hurd, who was to become famous for his *Letters of Chivalry and Romance* (1762), asserted that travels had a cosmopolitan value and had to be expanded all over the world. In his opinion, travelling to Italy was beneficial as Englishmen could tangibly demonstrate their superiority in comparison with the local people. A more balanced opinion was expressed by Gibbon in his *Autobiography*, where he claimed that travellers had to become cultural interpreters of the different world that Italy presented to them (Brillì 33-6). The critic G. S. Rousseau introduces the notion of Grand Tour as a form of homosexual secret arrangement.

⁶² Unless travellers made long deviations in France, the crossing of the Alps, compulsory for all those who came from the North, was a sublime as well as an objectively dangerous enterprise. Carried by five strong men, Gibbon wrote in his autobiographical notes, published posthumously in 1796, that the crossing of the Mont Cenis was not only hard but also extremely dangerous (Brillì). During the crossing of the same pass, Walpole had to face a rather difficult situation: "[i]t was when his lapdog, Tory, got eaten by a wolf that Horace Walpole began to have serious reservations about Mont Cenis. Swathed in beaver furs, he had been lumbering up the mountain path on a chaise carried by four sweating porters" when he saw his dog taken away by a young wolf. "His shock was understandable.(...) Shaken, Walpole's travelling companion, Thomas Gray, commented that perhaps Mont Cenis 'carries the permission mountains have of being frightful rather too far'. And Walpole decided that the cursed mountain was a devilish place"

(Schama 463-4). Others, like James Boswell (1740-1795), described fewer monuments and sites of interest than their exalted erotic adventures (Brilli).

⁶³ Radcliffe did not possess the requisites to travel when she was young as she was not an aristocrat, she was not educated at Oxford, and most of all she could not afford a Grand Tour. She left Britain only once when she visited Holland, Germany and the Swiss border with her husband in 1794. J.M.S. Tompkins and Natalie Schroeder mention Louis Ramond de Carbonnière (1755-1827) as a possible influence for Radcliffe thanks to his *Observations Made in the Pyrenees, To Be Useful in Observations of the Alps*, published in 1789.

⁶⁴ Perkins includes J. Moore's (1729-1803) novel *Zeluco* (1789) among the potential sources on Ann Radcliffe for *A Sicilian Romance* and *The Italian*. The protagonist is a scandalous and selfish profligate man of Sicilian origins, whose dark character influenced Byron as well. The text contained descriptions of Sicily.

⁶⁵ The speed with which the characters pass from one place to the other seems to betray unawareness of realistic distances that might reveal a knowledge acquired through literature and visual arts, not on a real journey in Italy.

⁶⁶ As Chard correctly comments, Savoy was part of the kingdom of Sardinia and it was located near Piedmont. It included Mediterranean resorts like Nice. It was not France or Switzerland either, but an independent state which progressively grew to become the reign of Italy. The monarchs of the liberated Italy in 1861 were the Kings of Savoy who remained in charge of the country for about eighty years.

⁶⁷ The French Olympe de Gouges (1742-1793), guillotined for her exaltation of freedom and women's rights, had rejected a second marriage after becoming a very young widow in the 1760s because she wanted to be independent and keep the money from her writings that she was able to print only after her father's death. She promoted freedom for women in her *Declaration of the Rights of Women and the Female Citizens*, a text published in 1791, based on the revolutionary declarations that she found unjust and incomplete. Actually, the French Constitution's motto of freedom, equality and brotherhood completely ignored the status of women. Her revolutionary text promoted suffrage for all and equal rights in marriage.

⁶⁸ One of the most important poets in the interregnum between Pope and Wordsworth, now almost forgotten, the popular Cowper, one of Radcliffe's ideal poetic mentors, wrote about the joy of happiness in the household. In "The Garden", a section of the poetic composition *The Task* (1785); he exclaims: "Domestic happiness, thou only bliss/ Of Paradise that has survived the Fall". These words contradict the female statements by showing a fictitious form of reality, which is translated into a male imagery of marriage as a source of harmony and delight. A humanitarian idealist, imbued with neo-classical and Augustan themes and a steady admiration for Homer, Cowper was one of the first authors who dreaded the iniquitous effects of industrialization, as he could perceive its dangerous consequences from its early development. He feared the new forms of industrial output and considered them as a negative force against nature. He was the first to express a deep and passionate love for nature in his poems that had a strong impact on Ann Radcliffe. *The Task* contains a mixture of influences from Classical, Medieval and Renaissance authors, among whom Milton is one of the most evident. The beginning of the section entitled "The Garden" is worth noticing for its striking resemblances with Dante's difficulty in the *Comedy* opening lines: "As one who, long in thickets and in brakes/Entangled, winds now this way and now that/His devious course uncertain, seeking home;/ Or, having long in miry ways been foil'd, /And sore discomfited, from slough to slough/ Plunging, and half-despairing of escape; If chance at length he finds a greensward smooth/ and faithful to the foot, his spirits rise, / He chirrup brisk his ear erecting steed" (Cowper 86-7).

⁶⁹ The poet Anna Seward's case is interesting. Her decision not to marry is tarred with the usual criticism that wants to find a particular sexual orientation to justify a personal decision, which may have been dictated exclusively by a desire for intellectual independence. Seward was her parents' only heir and she could count on a good income, which allowed her to live at great ease in an elegant mansion surrounded by a vast park. She had a circle of friends, intellectuals, philosophers and scientists forming an exclusive

coterie. Unlike the great majority of the women of the age, she received a private education from her father, a fact totally disapproved of by her mother, who thought that culture for women was improper in an epoch where conventional drawing room accomplishments were considered more than enough without risking of trespassing propriety.

⁷⁰ All Radcliffe's female characters enjoy abundance: Julia becomes the heir of a large fortune and also inherits the castle that her brother Ferdinand renounces. Emilie becomes her relatives' only heiress. She also receives Laurentini's consistent donation. Ellena de Rosalba receives her due inheritance and her title. Adeline recovers her father's title and fortune.

⁷¹ "The marriage of Ellena and Vivaldi is celebrated "in a scene of fairy-land". The novel's closure, instead of distancing the text from romance, reaffirms its status as a romance fiction and thus commits itself to a sexually and textually anarchic mode of writing" (Chaplin *Law Sensibility and the Sublime* 137). Castle, focuses on the strange preternatural finale of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* whose "mood of hypnotic, sweetish melancholy carries over into the last sentence of the novel. (...) Enchantments, shades, haunts, sacred spots, the revivification (through memory) of a dead father, a perpetually mourning reader: the scene is tremulous with hidden presences (...) home itself has become uncanny, a realm of *apophrades*" (83). Margaret Doody finds that "in *A Sicilian Romance* there is a variety of impressively intense dream-like sensations" (563). Lévy claims that the supernatural is only partially explained and mystery subsists in the majority of her novels (280). It may seem that the potential Radcliffe's trend towards real supernaturalism is objectively stronger than it is generally thought.

⁷² Gendered authorship became fluid in a period where women used male pseudonyms to avoid criticism against their sex, and on the other hand, male authors pretended to be women in order to be sellable writers. The limits of the category are actually more blurred than is generally thought. In addition, the male Gothic is usually circumscribed to the works of Lewis and Maturin that are rather unique *per se* and cannot be representative of wider literary output.

⁷³ See next section on *The Monk*.

⁷⁴ "Antigone's situation", presented by Luce Irigaray, describing the woman who is cut off from society and is buried alive, cannot be applied to Radcliffe's main characters who are proactive agents, intent on facing the world. It could apply to Louisa Bernini, locked in her castle dungeons by her cruel husband. However, she resists injustice and is saved by her resilience and her daughters' courage.

⁷⁵ It may be interesting to spend a few words on Joanna Southcott as her strange personality together with her theories had a strong impact on a number of people that became her followers of her "millennial prophecies" (Richard Maxwell 449 Note 4). Charles Dickens's *The Tale of Two Cities* (1859) was intended to create a lively as well as gloomy description of the last decades of the eighteenth century, which corresponds to the period of this specific study. The beginning of the novel introduced a variety of essential themes which summarized the *chiaroscuro* spirit of the period: "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way [...] it was the year of Our Lord one thousand seven hundred and seventy-five. Spiritual revelations were conceded in England at that favoured period, as at this. Mrs. Southcott had recently attained her five-and-twentieth blessed birthday, of whom a prophetic private in the Life Guards had heralded the sublime appearance..." (Charles Dickens 5). Despite the author's ironic tone in mentioning Joanna Southcott, the presence of the woman at the beginning of the text has an ominous value.

⁷⁶ For more detail on this theme, see Introduction.

⁷⁷ Michel Foucault's ideas concern De Sade (1740-1814), René Charles Guilbert de Pixérécourt (1773-1844) and, generically, the "tales of terror" (even though he also takes Homer and Luis Borges as examples for his demonstration on language). These concepts have often been appropriated by Gothic

criticism to determine the *genre* characteristics. Foucault claims that the transformation in the use of language takes place at the end of the eighteenth century when “something more obscure and paradoxical” happens: “these languages which are constantly drawn out of themselves by the overwhelming, the unspeakable, by thrills, stupefaction, ecstasy, dumbness, pure violence, wordless gestures, and which are calculated with the greatest economy and precision to produce effects (so that they make themselves as transparent as possible at this limit of language toward which they hurry, erasing themselves in their writing for the exclusive sovereignty of that which they wish to say and which lies outside of words) – these languages very strangely represent themselves in a slow, meticulous and infinitely extended ceremony” (60-1). He also claimed that the language of terror is “of necessity excessive [as] it is always beyond the limit in relation to itself; it only speaks as a supplement starting from a displacement such that the language from which it separates itself and which it recovers is the one that appears useless and excessive, and that deserves to be expunged; but as a result of the same shift, it sheds, in turn, all ontological weight” (65). However intriguing, these words may not be equally applied to all Gothic novels. The language of *the Romance of the Forest* is based on deferral inasmuch that it uses *suspense* with a certain frequency to keep attention alive but it is not “beyond the limits” or “excessive”.

⁷⁸ Some characters, being lost in a strange forest at the beginning of the story, may recall a young man’s mysterious adventure. Abandoned by his father and lost in a forest, *Alexis* (1789), experiences strange events. The analogy was highlighted by Robert Mayo: “It is probable that to the list of Mrs. Radcliffe’s sources for *The Romance of the Forest* there should be added a French Romance, *Alexis, ou la Maisonnette dans les bois* (...) The French story has certain resemblances to Mrs. Radcliffe’s novel [and her] imagination owed Ducray a very considerable debt” (501-3) However, he concluded his “scenes of terror were ineptly conceived when measured against the delicate artistry of [Mrs. Radcliffe]” (505). The novel was part of a series of stories for younger readers and was written by the French author François Guillaume Ducray-Duminil (1761-1819), the father of the popular novel and the *roman noir* in France.

⁷⁹ The name may be taken from Antoine Houdar De La Motte (1672-1731), a French poet and playwright whose fables were inserted into *A Collection of Poems* by Robert Dodsley (1704-1764) published in six volumes in 1758. Antonie de la Motte wrote a play entitled *Amadis de Grèce* (1699), which was an adaptation from *Amadigi* (1560) of the Italian Bernardo Tasso (1493-1569), father of the more famous Torquato Tasso. One important detail is that Radcliffe’s favourite musician Handel wrote a magic drama in three acts *Amadigi di Gaula* composed in 1715, while staying at Burlington House. De La Motte’s surname was also connected to the so-called ‘Affair of the Necklace’ organized by countess De La Motte who tried to procure an inestimable diamond jewel for herself, pretending it was for Queen Marie Antoinette. Even though the latter was unaware of the machinations and the culprits were found, tried and condemned, the scandal irremediably tainted her reputation. Cagliostro was initially reputed responsible but later acquitted for lack of evidence against him. Interestingly, Trapp’s poem dedicated to Virgil is included in Dodsley’s collection.

⁸⁰ A former soldier, François Gayot De Pitaval (1673-1643) decided to study law and become a lawyer when he was in his forties. He was a prolific author and became famous for writing accounts of controversial legal cases. The story of Adeline seems to have some analogy with the case of Augustine Françoise de Choiseul, born in 1696 to Louise Gabrielle De La Baume Le Blanc, a beautiful and promiscuous woman (Louise de la Vallière, her sister was one of Louis XIV’s lovers) and her husband, the old duke César Auguste De Choiseul. Not being sure of the paternity, the mother had decided to give Augustine to a friend as a foster child. Both parents died when she was young. The girl sued her uncle to legitimize her position and the case attracted attention. She won the case but died a few years later. De Pitaval’s stories were fictionalized by “Charlotte Smith in the collection of *The Romance of Real Life* published in 1787” (Chard, 367). McIntyre claimed that there were potential analogies between Smith’s work and *The Romance of the Forest*.

⁸¹ De La Motte’s situation may be initially seen as the mirror of Dante’s entering into a sort of magic wood before starting his strange journey to hell. De La Motte has committed crimes caused by his fall into vice and he has to be exiled from society.

⁸² Apparently suffering from a series of complexes, Norton maintains that Radcliffe lived a secluded life because she might have felt she was not up to the public's expectations or might have been tormented by secret worries.

⁸³ Interestingly, Norton provides evidence that the blue-stocking and "late Augustan [Elisabeth Carter's] brilliant translation of Epictetus remained unsurpassed for many years" (81) - a detail which partially denies the statement of a general lack of education in women. In fact, many important personalities usually gathered in T. Bentley's house. Montagu Pennington argued that Mrs. Carter expressed enthusiastic opinions on Ann Radcliffe's novels, especially *A Sicilian Romance* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho*: "But of all authors of this class, Mrs. Carter thought most highly of Mrs. Radcliffe, and was most delighted with the perusal of her Romances. The good tendency of all her works, the virtues of her principal characters, supported on the solid foundation of religion, the elegance of her style, and her accurate, as well as vivid, delineations of the beauties of nature, appeared to her such as to raise Mrs. Radcliffe to a degree of eminence far superior to any writer of *romance* of the present day" (Montague Pennington 300). Norton mentions the importance of the cultural circles of illustrious women gravitating around Dr. Johnson, Joshua Reynolds and Garrick (Elisabeth Montague, Hannah More, and H. Lynch Piozzi).

⁸⁴ It seems that the *cliché* of inescapable ignorance for a woman who was not born in the aristocracy or in upper class is difficult to overcome, even for enlightened critics. Having grown up surrounded by cultural events at her uncle's home, she became an avid reader and art lover. Even though she did not know Greek, she adored listening to the sounds of its words (Talfourd). She did not learn Latin but probably had at her disposal a huge amount of translations of Classics, which were constantly published during the period, as Hopkins and Gillespy attest in their study of literary translation in Britain.

⁸⁵ Kavanagh's Victorian opinion is the echo of male prejudices that were common in the period but which reflected the general thought of Radcliffe's contemporaries as well: "Had Ann Radcliffe been John Radcliffe and received the vigorous and polished education which makes the man and the gentleman, we might have a few novels less, but we would assuredly have some fine pages more in that language where, spite their merit, her works will leave no individual trace" (123).

⁸⁶ Baldick and Mighall claim that Wordsworth was the one to play a major role in destroying her and the Gothic. By means of her irony, Austen was almost more lethal than any vehement critic of the Gothic. *Northanger Abbey* was the ultimate parody on Radcliffe. The novel *Emma*, too, is rather peremptory in its presentation of Radcliffe's *The Romance of the Forest* that Austen connects to Harriet Smith's character. Emma has chosen Harriet as her friend to patronize and demonstrate her own superiority compared to the girl's poor discernment: "She was not struck by anything remarkably clever in Miss Smith's conversation" (32), "Harriet certainly was not clever" (34), "Harriet had no penetration" (35). When Harriet confesses that she has read *The Romance of the Forest* and Roche's *The Children of the Abbey* (37), the character's demolition is complete. Roche and Radcliffe's devaluation, too.

⁸⁷ MacCarthy posits that being alone all the time because of her husband's editorial duties, she "found in the exercise of her imagination the pleasure, which more gregarious women find in social intercourse" (399). But the result of her efforts, in particular "her interpolated poems", which are inserted into her narrative with a pastoral and bucolic intention "are worthless in themselves and absurd in their settings (...). She is the supreme example of genuine literary power misdirected for want of education" (403).

⁸⁸ The scene taken from *The Italian* has highly dramatic qualities which perfectly blend with the sense of horror of the impending crime that has to be committed. It is ideally connected with the Greek Aeschylus (the sense of inevitable divine punishment) and the Latin Seneca (the horror of an unnatural crime):
'Avoid violence, if that be possible' she added, immediately comprehending him,
but let her die quickly! The punishment is due to the crime.'
The Marchesa happened, as she said this, to cast her eyes upon the inscription over a Confessional, where appeared, in black letters, these awful words, 'God hears thee!'
It appeared an awful warning; her countenance changed; it had struck upon her heart.
Schedoni was too much engaged by his own thoughts to observe or understand her silence.

(*The Italian* 176).

Traces of Greek tragedies can be recognized in Ann Radcliffe's texts as well. Clery explains there was a general conviction that "the tragedians of Ancient Greece were the privileged intimates of fear" (48).

⁸⁹ Virgil, like all major classical authors, was translated various times, during the century. A relatively popular version was written by Christopher Pitt (1699-1748) in 1740. Gillespie explains that Virgil's works were "englished" by J. Warton later in the century. He also highlights that the number of translations of the major classic authors was astonishingly numerous.

⁹⁰ Virgil was inspired by the philosopher Theophrastus' *Enquiry into Plants (Historia Plantarum)*, written between the fourth and the third centuries BC. One of his oldest sources is *Works and Days*, written by the poet Hesiod in the 700 BC.

⁹¹ The passage is taken from the *Georgics* translated by William Sotheby (1757-1833). During the first decades of the nineteenth century, Sotheby's *Georgics* were published with Dryden's *Aeneid* and Wrangham's *Eclogues* in a complete collection of Virgil. The following is Dryden's rendering of the same lines in the 1697 edition (printed in London for Jacob Tonson). It presents a free translation, which is a more personal adaptation of Virgil's *Georgics*, which corresponds to his creative strategy, faithful to the original but at the same time different from it (Gillespie *English Translation and Classical Reception*). Consequently, the number of verses does not strictly correspond to the Virgilian original lines (9-21) in the Latin version (Virgilio II, 32). Dryden chooses to change the order of trees, and the "poplar" comes after the "osiers" and the "willows". Virgil starts with the "osier" and the "broom" then mentions the "poplar":

Some Trees their birth to bounteous Nature owe:
For some without the pains of Planting grow.
With Osiers thus the Banks of Brooks abound,
Sprung from the watry Genius of the Ground:
From the same Principles grey Willows come;
Herculean Poplar, and the tender Broom.
But some from Seeds inclos'd in Earth arise:
For thus the mastful Chesnut mates the Skies.
Hence rise the branching Beech and vocal Oke,
Where Jove of old Oraculously spoke.
Some from the Root a rising Wood disclose;
Thus Elms, and thus the salvage Cherry grows.
Thus the green Bays, that binds the Poet's Brows,
Shoots and is shelter'd by the Mother's Boughs.
These ways of Planting, Nature did ordain,
For Trees and Shrubs, and all the Sylvan Reign. (Book II: 12-27, 71-72)

I also include a version more similar to the original, taken from Project Gutenberg, whose translator is not specified. Interestingly, the colour of the willow is "grey", like in Dryden. Sotheby's chooses "azure". Virgil had defined as "*glauca*", a colour that is a mixture of azure and green:

The plains and river-windings far and wide,
As pliant osier and the bending broom,
Poplar, and willows in wan companies
With green leaf glimmering grey; and some there be
From chance-dropped seed that rear them, as the tall
Chestnuts, and, mightiest of the branching wood,
Jove's Aesculus, and oaks, oracular
Deemed by the Greeks of old. With some sprouts forth
A forest of dense suckers from the root,
As elms and cherries; so, too, a pigmy plant,
Beneath its mother's mighty shade upshoots
The bay-tree of Parnassus. Such the modes
Nature imparted first; hence all the race
Of forest-trees and shrubs and sacred groves
Springs into verdure.

⁹² Literary translations from the Classics were enormously popular and widely marked the cultural development in the West, especially during the seventeenth and the eighteenth centuries (Gillespie 3).

⁹³ It is amply demonstrated by Hopkins in his observations on Dryden's translations of the Ancients, by Robin Sowerby in his analysis of the epic, by P. Wilson in her research on ancient pastoral, by Garth Tissol in his study on translations from Ovid, and by Gillespie in *English Translation and Classical Reception*.

⁹⁴ She made only two exceptions to this rule: Chapter XIII in Volume III of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* features a passage from "Pope's Homer" (465) concerning a few lines from the *Iliad*, describing a horrible tempest. The epigraph may be read as an understated analogy of Emily's ordeals with the Homeric heroes' sufferings. Chapter XVIII in *The Romance of the Forest* inserts a line by Joseph Trapp (1679-1747) dedicated to Virgil's tomb. It highlights her affinity with the Latin poet.

⁹⁵ Moreover, using translations of Classics may have seemed inappropriate because of prejudices. In fact, classical scholar Richard Bentley (1662-1742) had shown a patronizing attitude towards translations and "Pope's Homer" while literary historian Thomas Warton (1728-1790) had claimed that "public taste was vitiated by translations" (Gillespie 99). The two scholars may have expressed minority opinions but we can infer that citing the Classics had to be done exclusively using the original language, an enterprise to which only scholars were righteously entitled to and from which Radcliffe probably felt inevitably excluded.

⁹⁶ Ovid's influences could potentially turn out to be hazardous even for a man, as Lewis's novel clearly demonstrates (see next chapter).

⁹⁷ In her analysis on Radcliffe's work and reception, Clery demonstrates that at least half of her readers were men and the conviction that basically only women were her exclusive public is the fruit of a long-established prejudice (98).

⁹⁸ In replying to the fictitious Adventurer, Dubious (S. Johnson) recognizes his interlocutor's merits as a literary critic by virtue of "a just distribution of praise amongst the ancients and the moderns: a sober deference to reputation long established, without a blind adoration of Antiquity; and a willingness to favour later performances, without a light or puerile fondness for novelty". (*The Adventurer*, no. 92, September 22, 1753, p.68).

⁹⁹ S. Johnson's analysis is carried out in a bilingual article with a clearly didactic function. In fact, he introduces his study and personal comment on Virgil's verses that are shown in their original language. Then he inserts Warton's translation. Even though written by men and (mostly) addressed to men, these scholarly articles were meant for a wider even less literate public.

¹⁰⁰ Although the taxonomy of literary translations is not complete yet, the figures provided by Gillespie are remarkable: he explains that, between 1550 and 1800, Virgil collects, for instance 103 entries, 95 of which are in verse. The most substantial are half a dozen complete *Works* and the same number of separate *Aeneid*, followed by nine or ten complete translations apiece of the *Georgics* and *Eclogues*. Most of the remainder are selections of one kind or another, frequently one or more Books of the *Aeneid*" (11).

¹⁰¹ The description of distant mountains may not be connected with Savoy where Adeline later escapes with La Motte's servant Peter. It is probable that Radcliffe is referring to the mountains in Auvergne that are separated from the Alps by the river Rhone. Indeed, Adeline navigates the river before reaching her new destination in Savoy, away from Montalt. Cartography was one of the many scientific fields, which was improved during the Enlightenment. The cartographer Philippe Buache de Neville (1700-1773) published a physical map of France in 1770. He worked for De L'Isle family, who had started publishing geographical maps in the seventeenth century. It is likely that Radcliffe consulted physical maps of France for the French geographical details in *The Romance of the Forest* and *The Mysteries of Udolpho*.

¹⁰² The entries dedicated to spring in *The Georgics* are the highest in number, compared with autumn and summer. Winter is mentioned many times because the season is generally shown in contrast with spring.

¹⁰³ Dido and Aeneas' meeting in a cave during a horrible storm is one of the exceptions to the rule. The passion is unchained when the characters are surrounded by a sublime landscape in the middle of nature. Radcliffe resonates with the more idealised *Georgics* and *Eclogues* than the epic *Aeneid*.

¹⁰⁴ In one of the typical picturesque anachronisms of her novels, St. Aubert and his neighbour dedicate themselves to botany, even though the discipline was not developed yet by the time the action takes place, in 1584. "St. Aubert's botanizing and country-estate improvement are pursuits which were in vogue among the English Upper classes from the 1740s onwards" (Howard "Introduction and Notes" *The Mysteries of Udolpho* 633). Anna Seward, Erasmus Darwin (1831-1802), and Sir Brooke Boothby (1744-1824) had created the *Lichfield Botanical Society* in the 1770s.

¹⁰⁵ The rendering by Dryden results in a gloomy image: "fun'ral Cypress rising like a Shrowd" (II: 121, 74). Dryden added his poetic genius to Virgil's poetry.

¹⁰⁶ This passage belongs to the 1697 version of Dryden's *Georgics*. The highly visual scene is dense with dreadful terror in the face of Nature's horrible strength. Interestingly Dryden's lexicon was later exploited in Gothic narratives.

¹⁰⁷ Adeline and Emily respectively meet farmers and peasants content with their toil or celebrating the end of labour at sunset. Her choice may have philosophical roots. While analysing David Hume's *An Inquiry concerning the Principles of Morals* (1751), Fiona Price explains: "Hume argues that, in the case of pastoral poetry, 'images of a tender and gentle tranquillity' should be communicated to the reader and to replace these with 'the idea of toil, labour and danger suffered by a fisherman' is an error" (4). This follows Virgil, who describes the farmer's hard work as a source of joy and the happy life in the countryside.

¹⁰⁸ Before Virgil, Lucretius had expressed the same idea in *The Nature of Things (De Rerum Naturae)*, but his conclusions were more negative and hopeless compared to Virgil, who claims that the Divinity is present everywhere. Lucretius does not believe in any divine intervention.

¹⁰⁹ The same nostalgic sentiment concerns Elvira's husband Gonzalvo when they are forced to escape from Spain because of their thwarted marriage in *The Monk* (M.G. Lewis 215).

¹¹⁰ A similar concept had been supplied by Lucretius as we have seen in the previous chapter.

¹¹¹ The *First Day's Vase* that can be admired in the Wedgwood Museum in Staffordshire is an important indicator of the original spirit of the factory, which united the new techniques of industrial production with the sense of ancient artistic tradition, in particular Greek, Etruscan and Roman. It is a black basalt vase ornate with reddish figures, a perfect replica of Etruscan art. The branch of the Wedgwood factory that produced them was called Etruria. The scene is a clear reference to Radcliffe's Uncle Bentley's production of the precious ceramics for Wedgwood that she could daily admire when she lived in his house as a child. The factory was called Etruria in recognition of the vases, which were found in Etruscan tombs. Later archaeological studies demonstrated they were actually of Greek origin. The mysterious Etruscan population was spread in various zones of central and northern Italy from the tenth to the fourth Century BC when they were progressively absorbed by the growing expansion of Rome. The Etruscan maintained frequent contact with the Greek civilization across the Adriatic Sea. Samples of the vases produced by the Etruria factory can be seen in the Wedgwood museum.

¹¹² The dialectical paradox is between darkness and light, a popular contrast with the French philosophers of Enlightenment and a recurrent theme all over the century. In this context, however, light is not a synonym for knowledge but of danger. The obscurity in the Forest is protective and the dark ruins will cast light on hideous crime and provide the truth.

¹¹³ This enchantment is also due to representations of Armida, the seductress in Torquato Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered (La Gerusalemme Liberata)*.

¹¹⁴ We can easily infer that the scenes that are mentioned but not described are from *The Metamorphoses*, which were frequently reproduced by Renaissance and Baroque painters, with an exuberance of harmonious sensual bodies and erotic scenes. Titian (ca 1480-85-1576) painted a variety of episodes from Ovid's masterpiece.

¹¹⁵ Horace (65-8 BC) was the poet for all seasons in the Augustans' ideal poetic pantheon, summarizing classical measure, stylistic elegance, philosophical attitude and wide knowledge. Recognized as the first auto biographer, the study of his works may have been the incentive for the great amount of biographies, autobiographies and memoirs that constellated the eighteenth and the nineteenth centuries. He described himself as a serious and honest person, not profligate, prude or greedy while exalting the moral values he had inherited from his father. His motto '*carpe diem*' was sometimes interpreted as a libertine ideal. See Richard Tarrant, "Ancient Receptions of Horace" in *The Cambridge Companion to Horace* (ed. Stephen Harrison).

¹¹⁶ Chard's notes provide important details. However, in the case of Ovid she is rather dismissive and defines him as a "Latin poet with a reputation for profligacy" and supports her theory using Shakespeare's definition in *As You Like It*, "The most capricious [lascivious] poet", and Byron's description in *Don Juan*, "Ovid's a rake, as half his verses show him", without even mentioning *The Metamorphoses* which are by far his most important work (378). Ovid (43 BC – 17-18 AD) was a great elegist and considered as important as his friends Virgil and Horace. The Ovidian scenes convey an idea of latent sensuality as well as of lurking danger for the female protagonist. Moreover, an erudite connection exists between Ovid and La Motte as both end their lives in exile for a mysterious fault they committed. The mystery of history is mingled with the innuendo in fiction. In light of Ann Radcliffe's knowledge, which appears to be much wider than many may have thought possible, this is certainly not a coincidence.

¹¹⁷ The only Greek poet of the group, Anacreon (ca 582- ca 485 BC), was famous for his explicit love poems and bacchanalian lyrics. His compositions special rhythm was based on the long and short sounds of Ancient Greek vowels, which made it almost impossible for translators to reproduce them, especially in English. One important detail is that Lorenzo da Ponte used Anacreon's verses for *Leporello's Aria* in Mozart's *Don Giovanni* (1787), the cruel seducer that is punished in the end. Although Mozart's work represents an *opera buffa* (with a tragic end), it is interesting to notice that Anacreon is inserted to provide a message of sensuality.

¹¹⁸ Dying one year after Virgil at a relatively young age, Tibullus (ca.60-19 BC) was an elegiac poet. Horace describes his qualities ("Pow'r of words, and ready eloquence") and his physical aspect ("The Gods to thee a Beautiful Form assign'd") in an elegy in his honour (Dart xlix). Ovid dedicated an ode to him recalling his passionate adventures and unfortunate loves: "Thus Venus often takes delight /Ill suited vot'ries to unite" (Dart xliii). His elegies and love poems were translated and published by Dart in 1720 in an edition containing biographical details. The choice of Tibullus denotes sensuality and the exaltation of explicit physical love (see the Sonnet "To Priapus" in the collection edited by Dart page 22).

¹¹⁹ See Chapter on *Vathek*. The fact that Petronius committed suicide to avoid the Roman tribunal's death sentence, is an intellectual allusion, which is an anticipation of Montalt's destiny, who prefers to commit suicide to the shame of a death sentence. This example demonstrates the author's classical knowledge. The understated prolepsis could be understood by cultivated readers.

¹²⁰ Montalt's love is under the sign of libertinism and dishonesty, whereas Louis' love is characterized by innocent adoration. The sacrifices and risks that Theodore faces for Adeline's sake highlight his generous heart and honest feeling.

¹²¹ Ariosto and Tasso are mentioned with relative frequency: the name of Tasso is pronounced in *A Sicilian Romance* and *The Italian*. Ariosto enchants all classes of people in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. The frequent occurrence of love at first sight episodes where men fall in love with Adeline but receive her cold response, transform her persona into an ideal Angelica's *Doppelgänger*. Moreover both *Orlando Furioso*

(1532) and *Gerusalemme Liberata* (1575) attach great importance to wood scenes where nature is the dominant factor.

¹²² Librarian to the king and author of *The Pursuits of Literature*, Mathias was hostile to the majority of his contemporaries' works. He did not approve of female writers such as Mary Wollstonecraft. He admittedly admired Anna Radcliffe's genius, even though he was equally extremely cautious about the potential danger of women writers. In his preface, dated November 1798, to *The Shade of Alexander Pope on the Banks of the Thames*, published in 1799, he claimed that: "the poetry of Mrs. Charlotte Smith and the sombrous fancy of Mrs. Radcliffe, cannot be mentioned without admiration" (51).

¹²³ *The English Review* published a positive analysis of Hoole's translation in July 1783. As far as Ariosto, the critic (who seems to favour Tasso), claims that Ariosto's "merits, it must be allowed are very uncommon and great; but perhaps, he was too little directed by cultivation and art. He owes every thing to nature" (171). A coincidental analogy with Radcliffe herself.

¹²⁴ That Radcliffe's plots resound with echoes of Tasso and Ariosto is not so unusual a hypothesis. Norton's analysis of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* unveils an analogy with the Ariostean theme of escape and recognizes some correspondences with the characters of Orlando Furioso which are interesting even though only superficially delineated: "The Paladin Astolpho and Duke Rodolpho have left their trace in the title (though 'the wealthy Adolpho' a romantic story in the *Lady's Magazine* in 1792 may also be the source). Emily combines both Angelica and the virgin Bradamante, whose lover Rogero [Ruggero] is seduced by the enchantress Alcina. The story of Anodante (via Handel's operas as well as Ariosto) makes its contribution to the story, after some gender transpositions: Valancourt is the pathetic maiden Genevra [Ginevra] seemingly seduced by the guileful Duke Polinisso (Montoni), to the great distress of her lover Ariodante (Emily)" (101). Norton's comparisons are not convincingly motivated, especially the one concerning Valancourt as this character never meets Montoni once in the six hundred thirty-two pages of the novel. Moreover, Armida's story in Tasso's *Jerusalem Delivered* cannot be compared to Lady Laurentini's in *Udolpho*. Adeline and Emily share Bradamante's traits as they are both courageous and ready to fight against injustice.

¹²⁵ The protagonists in Radcliffe's *romances*, either males or females, are generally fond of literature and often read a variety of Classics. An example is Valancourt who went on his solitary journey through the Pyrenees and took with him texts of classic and Renaissance authors: "St. Aubert was somewhat surprised to find in his room volumes by Homer, Horace and Petrarch; but the name Valancourt, written in them, told him to whom they belonged" (*Mysteries of Udolpho* 36). The choice of these three authors may not be casual, as is often the case in Radcliffe. Homer, the great epic poet whose life was surrounded by innumerable legends, wandered from town to town reciting his poems, which were to influence Western Culture deeply. He may be a symbol announcing Emily and Valancourt's itinerant adventures and their separation for some years to come. Horace was representative of the poetic measure and equilibrium exalted by Augustan poets and during the entire eighteenth century, as mentioned before. It may be a symbol of the elegance of Radcliffe's prose and narration and also a symbol of the young man's latent epicurean character who tends towards the *carpe diem* ideal of enjoying every single moment. The Italian pre-Humanist Petrarch, a great Latin scholar and late medieval poet, was famous for his love sonnets and odes collected in the *Song Book* (*Canzoniere*). Written in vernacular Italian, as an intellectual divertissement, they became the basis for the development of modern Italian together with Boccaccio's *Decameron*. His presence among Emily's suitor's books denotes idealized love.

¹²⁶ *Orlando Furioso* is one of the most influential works of Western literature. Echoes of this Renaissance masterpiece can be found in Edmund Spenser's *Fairie Queene* (1590-6), in William Shakespeare's *Much Ado about Nothing* (1598-9) and in Miguel de Cervantes *Don Quixote* (1605-15). Ariosto's introduction of a magic ring, which gives invisibility and power to those who wear it, and the series of epic battles, has been variously absorbed and used during the eighteenth century (See Diderot's *Bijoux Indiscrets*). It can be found in more recent novels such as J. R. R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* (1954-6). The fights between good and bad magicians as well as mythical winged creatures in *Orlando Furioso* may have given more than one hint to J.K. Rowling for her *Harry Potter* saga (1997-2007). As Gillespie puts it, the proliferation

of successive literary translations may have caused the disappearance from the cultural memory of the original text.

¹²⁷ “The abbey is protected by a supernatural power, and none of the country people dare approach it” (69).

¹²⁸ In her article Cynthia Griffin Wolff claims that situations of desire (and therefore of sexual danger) exist only in particular inner spaces (100) - an observation which does not really correspond to Adeline’s potential for seduction, on the one hand, as well as the lurking danger of violation on the other, which is concrete whenever she is in the presence of people of the opposite sex, either inside an abode or outside surrounded by nature, as when she is kidnapped in the middle of the forest.

¹²⁹ “Radcliffe keeps returning to the both seductive and invigorating appeal of Adeline’s distress (...) Obviously, Adeline’s ‘glowing charm’ solicits not reason, not sexually neutral ‘humanity’ of sexually nonspecific onlookers, but heterosexual manhood in particular: Adeline’s body arouses various degrees and a mixture of tenderness and desire in the gentlemen bending over her” (C. Johnson 74).

¹³⁰ Giovanni Paisiello (1740-1816) was a well-known Italian musician at the time and was appreciated by Radcliffe.

¹³¹ Critics have frequently tried to identify the sources of her descriptions in travel and tourist literature. Radcliffe’s descriptions of Venice in *Udolpho* unleashed a sequel of hypotheses and a hunt for literary sources. Lévy posits that her sources should better be found in artists such as Canaletto, Guardi, Tiepolo and Longhi (248).

¹³² The appreciation of nature is a feature inherited by the Romantic poets and authors both in Britain (especially Wordsworth, Shelley, and Keats) and in France and Germany (Heine, Hölderlin, De Musset, and De Vigny). The Romanticism developed in Italy was more connected to historicism. Scott’s novels were appreciated and taken as an important example, in a period of struggle for national identity and wars of independence. Nevertheless, Alessandro Manzoni’s (1785-1873) historical novel *The Betrothed, I Promessi Sposi* (1827 first edition, 1842 final revised version) contains many influences from the early Gothic novels, especially Radcliffe and Lewis, which have not been explored yet.

¹³³ According to C. Johnson, anachronism is a device to mask Radcliffe’s real social criticism of contemporary Britain. In *The Romance of the Forest* Radcliffe draws comparisons between Britain and France, a theme that was quite common in the political debate of the day.

4. Ovidian moments, Greek Drama and Gothic Boccaccio in Matthew G. Lewis's *The Monk*

4.1. An Ambiguous Novel

In this chapter, I am going to examine one of the most problematic and ambivalent novels, published at the end of the eighteenth century. I analyse the cultural influences that Lewis may have received at home and during his journeys abroad. After first comparing the text to the other two works already discussed in this thesis, I introduce the critical literature on *The Monk*. I present less evident but extremely important elements to detect sources that have not been extensively identified. My intention is to discuss Lewis's work from a different perspective and demonstrate that among the multiple images and themes that can be identified in its development, it is possible to discover traits that are connected with Greek and Latin Antiquity as well as with medieval authors such as Boccaccio and Dante. These interesting aspects have received little attention in the existing critical literature about *The Monk*, which is in any case extensive and includes a rich variety of interesting and challenging hypotheses. It is also my aim, as in the previous chapters, to highlight iconographic examples that lie behind some climatic scenes in the novel.

The peculiarity of the text, which was and still is the object of different and opposing critical points of view, starting from its anonymous publication which took place on 12 March 1796, is that it is characterized by unusual and multifaceted contents, liable to be interpreted in several ways, and by disturbing images that can still confuse and shock readers today. According to some critics,

such as Lévy¹ and Louis Peck, the book may be the final draft of a story Lewis had been working on ever since his return from France in 1792, during his adolescent years - an idea which was rejected by Summers (Lévy 327; Peck 25). From the documents diligently collected by Baron Wilson², we know that the novel may have been ready in September 1794 - a fact that has led some critics to suppose that the first publication could be dated back to 1795. Lewis's letters written to his mother at the end of 1794 provide evidence that the work was ready to be issued at that stage³. As there are no traces left of this potential ur-text, with the exception of two copies mentioned by Emma McEvoy and Nick Broom⁴, it is possible to infer that there was just a limited number, if any, to be distributed to a restricted circle of people. Born in July 1775, coincidentally the same year as Jane Austen, and therefore, fifteen and eleven years younger than Beckford and Radcliffe respectively, Matthew Lewis published his novel when he was only twenty years old. It must be noted that even at this young age, Lewis must have already acquired a remarkable education in public schools⁵ and at Oxford University. At the time prior to the publication he had not only travelled to France, Germany and Holland but had spent various months in these countries, immersing himself in the local cultures, to acquire wider linguistic knowledge. Publishing at a young age is a feature shared by the two authors I have studied in the previous sections: we know that Beckford was twenty-two when he wrote *Vathek*, and Ann Radcliffe was twenty-six when her third novel, *The Romance of the Forest*, was published.

Most scholars agree that Lewis was particularly precocious and the intensity of his literary activity was high during his teens⁶ and earlier in his

childhood. According to his father's plans, he was to enter a successful diplomatic career thanks to the political role his parent had played in the British Government at the War Office. He became an MP but his love for literature, which he had inherited from his mother⁷, was stronger than his taste for legislatures and assemblies, even though according to Peck he was a diligent Member of Parliament, regularly attending meetings and sessions when he was in charge. During school and universities years, he read extensively, was interested in drama and acting, and wrote poems. His early letters contain the mention of a novel⁸ that he had supposedly written when he was sixteen. While there are relatively few traces of his first efforts in prose, it is certain that his love for literature developed at an early age and his most widely known work was created before he was twenty, in a strangely similar way to the French poet Arthur Rimbaud, eighty years later, whose original poetic production was authored in the four years before he turned twenty. Whereas Rimbaud stopped writing altogether, preferring an adventurous existence to literary fame, Lewis continued writing while enjoying his privileged life in England (Miles "Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis" 44) until his father's death in 1812, when he abandoned writing and started travelling to Europe and his plantations in Jamaica (David L. Macdonald *Monk Lewis*). He was never able to replicate the success and originality of his first literary exploit. Most critics agree on the fact that his dramatic production was interesting but was generally based on Gothic clichés⁹ while the tales and ballads he published later were mostly translations from German (Lévy; Rix; Lauren Fitzgerald "The Gothic Villain"), French, Italian, Latin and Greek (Macdonald *Monk Lewis*), where plagiarism seemed stronger

than genuine inspiration (Gamer “Authors in Effect: Lewis, Scott, and The Gothic Drama”).

4.1. Lewis’s reception by contemporaries

The Monk is an ambiguous novel. At the time of its publication, it created an uproar of fervent protests against its crude and shocking representation of violence, sexuality and incest. The novel still continues to attract and repel for its narrative exaggerations, which frequently tend to cast a shadow on other interesting aspects. Punter claims that “dislocation” becomes as evident in the novel as to make it “grotesque like *Otranto*” and “less credible than Ann Radcliffe’s Gothic novels (Punter *The Literature of Terror* 85). Its excessive graphic imagery mixed with “libertine discourse [was] scandalous because it addressed a wide and indiscriminate audience, including many young women” (Ellis 115). If the young clergyman and head-master Vicesimus Knox, in his *Essays Moral and Literary* published in 1778, had claimed that the novels of well-established writers such as Richardson, Smollett, and Fielding had probably contributed to the “degeneracy of the age” (Gallaway 1042), we may well imagine his feelings of outrage and those of the reading public, with the publication of Lewis’s novel only two decades later.¹⁰

However, following Ellis’s analysis, it is possible to detect two trends in contemporary critical reviews, one in favour of the novel and the other against. There were literary magazines of liberal or Jacobin political orientation such as *The Monthly Mirror*, *The Analytical Review*¹¹ and *The Morning Chronicle*, which appreciated the novelty of the story (105). Fuseli’s various versions of *The Nightmare*, and its intriguing contents had created appreciation of

Schwarzkunststudie in the visual arts (5-6). Similarly, the publication of *The Sorrows of Young Werther* in 1779 and of tales of mysteries and supernatural events had increased the craving for frightening horror stories (J. Watt 71). Nevertheless, the creativity and literary technique shown in *The Monk* were by far superior to the stylistics of popular novels. From a political point of view, the bloody riot and the consequent punishment of the Prioress by an enraged mob was seen as a metaphor for dramatic actions taking place in France during the Revolution (Ellis 95). The revolution, as an inevitable source of inspiration was envisaged by the Marquis de Sade in his essay, which presents a hypothesis shared by Parreaux, Paulson, Clery, Corinna Wagner and, very recently, Nick Groom. Andrew L. Cooper argues that the scene of the furious mob's unchained violence against the Prioress is apt to be misinterpreted: "The scene not only resonates with the Revolution, it also justifies it somewhat by portraying the target of revolt as truly corrupt and by allowing the ravages of the mob, indirectly, to bring about a happy ending for the surviving characters. Jacobin or not, Lewis infuses his work with ambivalent revolutionary tendencies, no matter how obscure, were intolerable for anxious English critics" (26).

Lévy, Ellis and J. Watt agree on the fact that readers and critics had two opposing ideas about the novel following their political orientations, one revolutionary and the other loyalist/conservative. As a consequence, conservative magazines (*The British Critic*, *The Critical Review*, and *The European Magazine*) highlighted the scandalous side of the story by exposing the lurking presence of the revolutionary germ. Consequently, their reviews were totally unfavourable. When Lewis decided to go public, in the same way as Walpole had

revealed his name at the time of the third edition of *The Castle of Otranto*, the protests became innumerable due to the presence of the title M.P. next to the author's name.¹²

Once it was clear who the author was, there was a systematic need to underline the work's detrimental features. In particular, the insistence on lustful details, as Coleridge emphasized in his analysis of Lewis's text, offended readers' sensibility. Coleridge's study appeared in *The Critical Review*, one year after the book had been printed for the first time. While aristocratically despising the waves of popular novels written in imitation of *Schauerromane* (Lévy 345; Kilgour 14; J. Watt 92), the Romantic poet was aware of Lewis's great literary qualities and appreciated the author's vivid imagination especially in certain parts of the novel.¹³ Lewis was "no common genius" to Coleridge, but he could not forgive the young man¹⁴ for various reasons.¹⁵ While the anti-Catholic connotations of the novel (Napier; Rix; Groom) and the description of the clergy's hypocrisy could be acceptable, Lewis's "suggesting that the Bible was unfit reading material for young girls" unleashed an uproar of protests (Miles "The Eye of Power" 23). However, it was with another contemporary critic that things went even further, as Gamer explains in his essay on "Genres for the Prosecution". Mathias' accusations of indecency against Lewis had significant consequences. The publication of *The Pursuits of Literature* forced Lewis to make modifications. The poem, written in 1797 and published in 1798, vehemently criticized the dangerous literary productions of many of his contemporaries. Mathias denounced the poor state of literature in unscrupulous people's hands and the more alarming danger of extended reading that allowed people (especially

women) with no proper education or adequate culture, to read scandalous books, superficially spread by indiscriminate publishers and circulating libraries. Neither Coleridge nor Mathias could tolerate the fact that the writer was a Member of Parliament either. The outraged Mathias focused his hyperbolic accusations on Lewis by defining him a pernicious example for society because of his political role, and compared him to the “shameful” John Cleland (1709-1789). Although the royal librarian did not directly invoke a trial against the writer, he made it clear that *The Monk* contained dangerous material that was to be publicly condemned (Gamer “Genres for Prosecution” 1059)¹⁶. The result was not only an expurgated version of *The Monk* in its fourth edition of 1798 but also a permanent negative mark on Lewis’s literary production that was perpetuated in the next fifty years or more (1051). Moreover, criticism has had a tendency to identify the author¹⁷ with his negative protagonist ever since (Clery 164).

Lewis had been (apparently) appalled by the accusations of immorality addressed to him. He rejected them in the correspondence to his father where he claimed that an author is morally neutral whereas the responsibility of good conduct is a problem that concerns the reader (Baron Wilson I: 185; Kilgour 144). Finally, the nickname ‘Monk Lewis’, which he had initially proudly accepted, slowly but inevitably became a burden.¹⁸

4.1. Diversified Opinions on the Novel

As R. Hume claimed in his essay on the clash between the Gothic and Romanticism, Lewis “attacks [his readers] frontally with events that shock and disturb [them]” using a method that was exploited by Beckford before him, and was later used by Mary Shelly and Maturin.¹⁹ R. Hume claims that Lewis was not

interested, like Walpole or Radcliffe, in simply maintaining an atmosphere of suspense: he actually wanted to shock (285). Duncan detects analogies in extreme patriarchal attitudes both in Beckford and Lewis's works, and posits that "Lewis's *The Monk* decisively establishes the ground of Gothic themes and figures as that of sexual pathology" (33-4).²⁰

The critical literature concerning Lewis's strange novel is immense. The themes that have been detected are myriad, each of them opening the way to contrasting interpretations. Puzzling and ambiguous, either a puppet in the hands of demonic forces, or a cruel hypocrite, Ambrosio's pathological behaviours have been seen in psychoanalytical terms, both Freudian and Lacanian. His ambiguous relationship with power, patriarchy and violence has often called into question a Foucauldian stance for analysis (Kosofsky Sedgwick, Miles *Gothic Writing*, Williams, Townshend, and Doyle). Derrida, Starobinski and Baudrillard's theories have been used by Hogle and Molesworth to demonstrate the intermingling of both obsolete and original narrative models in anticipation of post-modernism. The first negative hero in Kilgour's opinion (144)²¹, Ambrosio, does not leave any reader indifferent because he cannot be easily deciphered. In Peter Brooks' words, he is like "the man coming out of the Enlightenment and its process of desacralization. He is the one who has to find spiritualism once more but the divinity he finds fills him with fear and anguish" (252).

Like several other scholars of the Gothic genre, Miles analyses Radcliffe and Lewis comparatively, as he considers them "the two most significant novelists of the late Eighteenth century" ("Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis"

43). As Miles underlines, Lewis came from a well-off family. The young author had read voraciously, travelled extensively and lived in different countries on the Continent. He represented the well-off upper classes - a totally different status from Radcliffe's who was positioned among the mercantile middle classes (45). He considers their different social positions as an explanation of their contrasting literary outputs.²² According to Kilgour (146), Lewis recreates, by changing and reversing it, Radcliffe's novel, *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. He apparently uses analogous situations, such as the protagonists who are raised in solitude and isolation.²³ Of a completely different opinion is Haggerty, who considers that Lewis was particularly good at manipulating Gothic effects in a much less refined way compared to Radcliffe. However, if on the one hand he was able to present the readers with repugnant situations, on the other he did not want to be convincing. He actually created "a new rationale for fictive expression" ("Gothic Fiction/Gothic Form" 24). Unlike Radcliffe, he concentrated on the physicality of situations and introduced the supernatural without the Radcliffean ambiguity, just for the taste of sensationalism which made him write excessive and repulsive scenes. Following Marquis de Sade's opinion, Haggerty also claims that his truculent scenes and realism are more effective and credible than any of Radcliffe's sublime descriptions (25) - an opinion which is shared by Groom (vi).

In his article about cryptonomy, Hogle argues that subterranean labyrinths, vaults, dungeons and crypts represent horrible secrets and dark mysteries. They represent the monolithic reign of devilish forces. However, Hogle's argument is not always applicable, as the function of underground locations may also have a protective function for the protagonists, as we can

verify in Radcliffe's novels. Moreover, the dichotomy between negative/positive architectures was present in *The Castle of Otranto* as well. Kosofsky Sedgwick deems that "the labyrinthine catacombs in *The Monk* reflect Ambrosio's dilemmas. The labyrinth, like the shifting optical illusions of Piranesi's *Carceri d'Invenzione*, disorganizes boundaries between inside and out, marking an inescapable and reciprocal entanglement of internal and external worlds" (24-5). Williams claims that the horrid subterranean galleries are metaphorical of dark patriarchal rules (*Aer of Darkness* 87) and Catholicism's obscure duplicity (117).²⁴ In his article "Power in the Darkness: Heterotopias, Literature, and Gothic Labyrinths", which confirms and expands Kosofsky Sedgwick's concepts, Botting considers the Gothic labyrinth as a form of "heterotopia", the Foucauldian multiple space of human geography, either physical or mental.²⁵ As the prevalence of dungeons is *The Monk's* architectonic characteristic, with the exception of the narrative subplot set in Castle Lindenberg, it maybe be possible to assert that the castle does not acquire in Lewis the importance it has in other Gothic narratives.²⁶

Napier's analysis stresses the complexity of *The Monk*, which is based on the dialectics of irreconcilable features. At first the text seems to declare that "moral impetus of the novel is that of unmasking, of exposing, and revealing" (113). Although "[t]he resolution of the narrative seems to depend on a process of revelation and unmasking" it is actually developed in parallel with "images (...) of veiling and distancing"(115) that are confusing and do not allow the reader to determine the actual truth of the story.²⁷ *The Monk's* problematic insistence on the 'veil' is extensively analysed by Kosofsky Sedgwick, who defines it as a

physical, a metonymical and a metaphorical object, not connected with hypocrisy or concealment but “suffused with sexuality” (256). It also becomes “a carrier of death” (258).²⁸

In her investigation of Lavater’s cultural repercussions, Wagner argues that there is a connection between *The Monk* and the epoch’s scientific discoveries.²⁹ Physiognomy and phrenology were the consequences of Locke’s challenge to Descartes’s dualism. The rigid division of body and soul envisaged by the French philosopher had been replaced by Locke’s definition of consciousness as a physical element. The Lockean intuition had inspired scientists and philosophers alike to decipher the unseen supposedly hidden within the body.³⁰

Elisabeth MacAndrew (137) highlights that expressions of sentimentalism and “benevolism” in *The Monk* seem to be inherited respectively from Richardson and MacKenzie. Richardson’s sentimentalism is reproduced in Antonia’s candid feelings. She becomes at times pathetic through her inability to understand the world. Moreover, she faces life’s ordeals with tragic passivity. MacAndrew claims that the difference from sentimental novels resides in the overwhelming evil, which is added to Lewis’s story. She underlines that both Antonia and Ambrosio are victims, the former because she is misled by unfortunate events and the latter because he is self-deceived and totally unfit for the real world. Ambrosio is a reluctant but inevitable villain, who has to face a constant interior battle that she defines as a “psychomachia”, which progressively alters his ego and dooms his actions (83). The *Man of Feeling*’s (1771) protagonist Harley is a benevolist example. Besides being excessively sentimental, he sacrifices himself for other people’s suffering. As a consequence,

he loses money, social recognition and love because of his unselfishness. In the end, his immolation is entirely useless. Similarly, some characters in *The Monk* show their good will, which is however ineffectual.

Miles defines Antonia as a person incapable of understanding the world because of her “hermeneutic inertia” (*Gothic Writing* 156). Her male counterpart, Lorenzo, is equally guilty, if not of limited understanding, at least of slowness of action. In spite of his nightmares that have warned him about Antonia’s ghastly destiny, he does not do anything to protect her and even accepts Elvira’s absurd rejection of his courtship with unnerving indolence. He does not activate his group of acquaintances to help Antonia recover her inheritance and does not intervene firmly with the Abbess to save his sister Agnes, inertly accepting the news of her death. Corroborating Brooks’ hypothesis, Kilgour claims that “the figure of Lorenzo becomes a scapegoat for the author, as the hero’s acts may reveal in exaggerated form, Lewis’s own fear of the responsibility of seizing moral authority in his narrative” (168).

Punter and Byron argue that “underlying many critical attempts to theorize a female Gothic is the idea that male and female Gothic differ primarily in the ways they represent the relationship of the protagonist to the dominant spaces depicted” (*The Gothic* 278). By virtue of this mechanical law, male protagonists should try to enter some “encompassing” interior whereas women should try to escape from a “confining” interior. I would argue that his hypothesis, which has been in various ways maintained since the creation of the term ‘female Gothic’, may not be applied to all Gothic stories indifferently. With the exception of the secondary plot concerning Agnes, who is imprisoned in a

secret cell of the convent, we may claim that the major male character is the one who is a captive: he is inside a monastery and a victim of the holy orders that have condemned him to a life of frustration. When Ambrosio decides to change his destiny, he fails. On the contrary, the female protagonist Antonia is not segregated and does not need to escape, except in the very last moments of the novel when she is entrapped within the symbolic labyrinth that has entangled her brother as well.

Presented as a “male Eve” (Williams *Art of Darkness* 116)³¹, Ambrosio acts entirely out of lust. Williams considers his failure as a progressive “feminization” of his character: indeed, when he becomes prey to desire and imbued with a new sensibility, he is doomed to fail. The progressive discovery of sensuality turns him into a woman, as far as his inner sensations are concerned. “The Monk, like the stereotypical female of medieval theology is weak, irrational, carnal [and] his own feminine side” leads him to perdition. (120). Ambrosio becomes irrational and emotional - a weakness inversely proportional to Matilda’s growing self-control and indifference. This is the opposite of what happens to Adeline in *The Romance of the Forest*, who becomes self-assertive (C. Johnson). Williams also claims that *The Monk’s* carnality reproduces Aristotle’s paradigm: evil is directly linked to the female. On the contrary, Haggerty, in his essay on “Queer Gothic”, considers Ambrosio’s violence and incest as an extreme form of a cruel patriarchal role that he fulfils violently (389). Other critics have seen a feminized Ambrosio in contrast with a masculinized Matilda, in particular William Brewer³², whose hypothesis is similar and specular to Williams’ idea of a feminized Ambrosio.

4.4. Lewis versus Beckford and Radcliffe

Lewis's story does not share the general linearity of plots of the previous novels: he uses the technique of the story-within-the-story, flashbacks and prolepses.³³ *The Monk* features many important characters that outnumber the protagonists in the other two authors' stories. Beckford's itinerant protagonists do not share Ambrosio and other characters' claustrophobic internment in *The Monk*.³⁴ Ambrosio lives in seclusion. Agnes is a prisoner in her aunt's castle in Germany and is later kept in captivity inside the dungeons of the convent in Madrid. Antonia cannot have freedom of movement, being a young girl of inferior rank and very scarce economic means. The only itinerant character in *The Monk*, Raymond, experiences some adventures that are dramatic and infernal. Even though in the first part of Beckford's novel, the caliph Vathek has not started his adventurous journey yet, he can move freely around his fabulous palaces and indulge in many different carnal pleasures. In *The Romance of the Forest*, Adeline is itinerant both in the first and the second part of the story: when she is inside the forest, she can discover nature and inspect the ruins of the castle, while in the mountains she wanders freely to discover alluring places. In spite of being a young girl of no means, Adeline moves with relative freedom and travels to various places. A cottage in the middle of the forest infested by *banditti* can be found both in *The Monk* and in *The Romance of the Forest*; the criminals, however, are different.³⁵ They are lethal in the former and compassionate in the latter. Vathek and Adeline appear to be geographically free, and conscious of their surroundings. They explore both known and unknown territories³⁶ whereas the protagonists in Lewis's work do not master

the spaces that enclose them. Any attempt of going beyond the threshold leads to danger and death.

The aspects that the novels share are the ambiguous and mysterious female figures, Matilda and Nouronihar, who respectively accompany Ambrosio and Vathek in their downfall towards hell. In contrast, verticality and ascension, both physical and social, are the directions that characterize *The Romance of the Forest*. The basic dichotomy between upward and downward movements creates the dramatic *dénouement* in Beckford and Lewis and the positive ending in Radcliffe.

Claire Kahane's paradigm of the "mother as enemy"³⁷ seems to be valid in all the three novels, but with some essential differences. Kahane posits that mothers can be cruel agents when alive. They maintain their dark nature when they become spectral identities, as in modern Gothic and horror novels. In Beckford as well as in Lewis, mothers are present physically, but they are not conscious or willing *nemeses*, as in Kahane's description. If they damage their children, it is because they have misunderstood existential messages. Carathis is the woman who pushes her son Vathek to destruction, although she is convinced he will have unlimited power. In *The Monk*, Elvira involuntarily pushes her unrecognized son Ambrosio to murder her. Interestingly, Madame De La Motte, a putative mother for Adeline in *The Romance of the Forest*, leaves her in danger of latent sexual harassment because she feels an unjustified form of jealousy. Therefore, they are not Kahane's eternal enemies but actually turn into inadequate or inept figures.

Ruth Bienstock Anolik's pattern of the "missing mother"³⁸ may be partially applied to the three stories. Carathis is physically present but can be defined as a missing mother as she is purely interested in power and wealth. Adeline may be the most suited for the example because her dead mother is scarcely mentioned and is excluded from the story development. In spite of being part of the story, Elvira is absent for Ambrosio since she abandoned him when he was a new-born, determining his life in the monastery and his tragic fate, but she is present for Antonia. However, her proximity does not help her. In fact, Elvira is disastrous in her pedagogical choices and becomes responsible for her daughter's tragic end.

Whereas it is true that all three stories abound with patriarchal and violent figures, both males and females, who impose their power in a cruel way, there is one peculiar pattern, which has not been scrutinized. Curiously, it is equally present in the three plots: it is the trope of what I call the "missing father".³⁹ If Carathis acquires too much power, Elvira is unable to protect her son and daughter, and Adeline is exposed to the risk of persecution and rape, this is because the characters' real fathers died prematurely and were therefore unable to provide the help that could avoid distress or tragedy. My claim is that the figure of the missing father should not be identified with a patriarchal element, but with a positive figure of affection and generosity. Vathek's father created an enormous kingdom. Ambrosio's dead father had protected a person of inferior social status; Adeline's father was killed cruelly and unjustly.⁴⁰ The originality of the *topos* may lie in the unusual idea of a positive father figure that is neither conservative nor patriarchal, but complementary to the female characters. Once

this positive presence is lost, chaos begins. All three missing fathers have disappeared before the beginning of the story and references to them are purely deictic. When they are lost forever, the story tends toward darkness and despair. However, when they can manifest their presence, they can save the protagonist from sorrow and death, as is the case for Adeline.

Punter and Byron highlight the “poor mapping” of Lewis’s story, which is actually inexistent, in *The Monk’s* territory. Madrid or the Black Forest’s undefined geographies do not allow any panoramic view beyond the action, and not a single detail is added to any location. Although Beckford’s places are midway between dream and reality, geographies are amply described. However, they are not identifiable. On the other hand, Radcliffe provides real geographical details but she also adds a dreamlike atmosphere to the places. The common denominator between Beckford, Radcliffe and Lewis is their extraordinary imagination, which is accompanied by an astute capacity to absorb and blend literary sources and suggestions from their contemporaries and literary figures of the past.

Lewis, like Walpole, Reeve, Beckford and Radcliffe, generally uses the third person narrative, with the exception of Raymond’s story, which is in the first person.⁴¹ However, Lewis’s narrative system is more complex, as his text introduces different levels of third-person narrations, which are both outside and inside the characters’ viewpoints. One interesting example is the beginning of the novel where we can observe the scene as if we were inside the church of the Capuchins among the congregation (*The Monk* 7). The point of view progressively moves near some characters, first Leonella and her niece Antonia,

then Don Christoval and his friend Lorenzo (8). The perspective is from within the male characters, and the reader can hear the voice coming from the younger female character, which is full of “delicacy and elegance” (9). At the end of the church scene, we follow Lorenzo de Medina’s viewpoint, whereas some pages later we are with the female characters who meet a gypsy: in this case the point of view belongs to Antonia, who observes the scene and listens to the song and its horrible omen (35), without understanding it. A further example of limited perspective is when the reader can follow Raymond in his dangerous adventure in the Black Forest inn. The reader is empathically petrified when the *banditti* are going to kill Raymond (107). One interesting narratological aspect is that Lewis does not allow the reader to observe the scene from Matilda’s perspective, thus increasing the ambiguity and reinforcing her halo of mystery.⁴² Therefore, the character’s real nature is an enigma that can never be fully deciphered.⁴³ Lewis originally introduces parallel plots and subplots to make the story less linear.⁴⁴ Jan B. Gordon believes that “the text-within-a-text revealing some previously hidden past for a reader who must struggle to de-construct it, gives the Gothic mode a kind of synchrony with the structure of radical Protestantism” (57), which would be later absorbed by Victorian texts, such as Anne Brontë’s *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848).⁴⁵ According to Brooks, Lewis created stories-within-the-story⁴⁶ to convey deeper concepts and introduce the supernatural. These micro-stories deviate from the principal text. However, they also reflect the main plot’s future events as a sort of *composition en abîme* whose perfect representation would be Jan van Eyck’s *The Portrait of Giovanni Arnolfini and His Wife*.⁴⁷ Radcliffe’s amply criticized *bathos*, followed by a fall in the narrative

tension, where mystery is rationalized in the finale⁴⁸, is opposed to Lewis's *pathos* of his unbearably violent contents. Beckford's strange ending and Radcliffe's soothing conclusion are replaced by a tumultuous closure in Lewis.

4.5. Cultural Experiences and Sources

Lewis was sent by his father to Holland in 1794 as a cultural *attaché* in the British Embassy - a post that he did not particularly appreciate but that provided him with spare time during which he dedicated himself to writing.⁴⁹ It was in this period that he supposedly wrote most of his novel. There is no record of Dutch literary or artistic influences that may have entered his creation from what can be evinced by his correspondence. He considered his stay in Holland extremely boring. One letter Lewis sent to his mother is explicit about his opinion of the country.⁵⁰

The stay in the Netherlands was interrupted by the French threat of war. This was the end of his golden experience on the Continent. He returned to England but, according to the letters he wrote to his mother, he had spent his time fruitfully writing a lot. Moreover, he was bringing with him the complete manuscript of *The Monk*, which was written⁵¹ on Dutch paper:

I long to hear your opinion of the farce which I sent you lately. I know that you will like it, because written by me; but I want to know which parts pleased you most. They say that practice makes perfect; if so, I shall one day be a perfect author, for I practice most furiously. What do you think of having written, in the space of ten weeks, a romance⁵² of between three and four hundred pages octavo? I have even written half of it fair. It is called 'The Monk' (133).

Lewis had spent some time in Scotland before his sojourn in Holland. There he met Scott, four years his senior. In 1793, he spent most of his time at Oxford University, rarely visiting his family or his mother. Even though her letters have been lost or destroyed, we can understand from Lewis's replies that she had expressed the desire to visit him, a request he explicitly rejects, claiming that Oxford was not a proper place for her to be seen.⁵³ Baron Wilson and J. Watt posit that the German stay may have been an important experience⁵⁴ for his literary production - an idea which is partially shared by Lévy⁵⁵ and Rix.⁵⁶ Actually, what we can understand from his letters is that he was learning the language to become a translator in order to earn money to be able to provide for his mother⁵⁷ - a statement he repeated obsessively in his correspondence to her. Lewis frequently mentions what he is writing and not what he is reading. He describes his meeting with Goethe laconically, and considers him less important than a semi-unknown composer's sister. His final ironic remark makes us doubt whether he really appreciated the writer's titanic literary importance: "Among other people to whom I have been introduced, are the sister of Schweter, the composer, and M.de Goëthe (sic), the celebrated author of Werter (sic)⁵⁸; so you should not be surprised if I shoot myself one of these fine mornings" (72). Although German literature was receiving some attention in England during the second last couples of decades, the literary universe from which Lewis borrowed to write *The Monk* is more complex and has deeper roots. His method was "assimilative and heterogeneous" (J. Watt 86), which confirms the hypothesis of multiple sources for a novel that contains a kaleidoscope of suggestions. We may argue that the *enfant terrible's* cultural substrata was wider and richer.

Like many of his British compatriots, he had been to France, where he had spent his summer holidays in 1791. Peck claims that Raymond is Lewis's hedonistic *Doppelgänger*: "he was young, rich and fond of pleasures" (17). While improving his cultural knowledge and linguistic skills, he may have observed the degeneration of the political situation and the beginning of the Terror. The historian Emmet Kennedy considered Lewis's work as a 'parable' of the events taking place in France after 1789 (Ellis, 81). Nevertheless, his correspondence from Paris is characterized by a certain superficiality that makes it difficult to believe that he was fully conscious of the situation. A number of critics consider this period as very influential in the process of writing *The Monk*. Recognizing the sources from French works is a hard task because the cultural ideas from France were innumerable.⁵⁹ Ellis and Lévy provide enumerations of themes and works that may have influenced Lewis. An important feature of French literature was its connection with philosophy. From Voltaire's *Candide* to De Sade's *Justine*, French literature was imbued with philosophical reasoning. A further interesting characteristic is French classical scholarship: intellectuals translated from the Classics and their translations were sometimes used for the English versions, as was the case of Boileau's adaptation of Longinus's text on *The Sublime*. French Enlightenment and science spread the scientific method. Radicalism, either philosophical or political, was another component of French literary production. What Lewis probably saw and read while in Paris were theatrical representations, novels and *romances*. Libertine and anti-clerical literary works were easily available for the young man⁶⁰ during his stay in France. In order to better understand what cultural and literary examples the young Lewis may have

absorbed during his early years, it is necessary to grasp the multiple and contradictory perspectives that the period actually offered. As far as erotic publications, the spirit of the century and the need for representation were concerned, Grantham Turner interestingly explains that “the eighteenth-century novel should be placed within a complex network of clandestine reading, looking, and reporting” (216).⁶¹ Lewis’s correspondence does not provide conspicuous details about his French experience. However, we could possibly infer that the historical events as well as the literary examples that he observed may have in part contributed to his taste for scandalous exaggerations.

An ingenious Renaissance text had told a fantastic tale which reversed many superstitious medieval traditions. François Rabelais’s (1494-1553) character, the giant Gargantua (1533-1535), offers a convent to Friar John who decides to establish the Abbey of Thélème, (“free will” in Greek). Both girls and boys are accepted and they spend their days studying playing music, practising healthy activities, and celebrating the beauty of nature. Most important of all, ‘monks’ and ‘nuns’ are free to leave when they want. A great humanist and man of science, Rabelais created his personal utopia for a better world without the obligations imposed by religious superstition. Rabelais’ dream becomes Lewis’s nightmare. Lewis reverses Rabelais’ positive allegory and turns it into a hell. In fact, *The Monk’s* contiguity between the nunnery and the monastery does not create a harmonious union of excellent human beings but only contributes to cruelty and horror. It is like Bosch’s *Garden of Earthly Delights* (1490-1510), which turns all joys into a surreal infernal place.

4.6. British Matrixes

Popular novelists such as Richardson, Smollett and MacKenzie provided different but equally valid writing modes. D. L. Macdonald supports the theory of Richardson's mould imitated from *Clarissa*, considering Ambrosio as one of the embodiments of Lovelace (167). Both protagonists are violent, rape the person they love, and cause their death. While supporting the analogies between the two major villains in *The Monk* and in *Clarissa*, R. Hume argues that "Robert Lovelace is a simpler character than Lewis's Ambrosio. But although Ambrosio is a more repulsive person, his responses to his own urges are far more complicated and meaningful than Lovelace's irresistible impulse and consequent remorse" (283).⁶²

A scarcely known and almost forgotten author, William Hutchinson, anonymously published a tale in 1772 "which included visions, portents, a scene of supernaturally instrumented devastation on a par with *Otranto* and, possibly for the first time, introduced a wicked double-dealing monk. It sunk almost without trace, in spite of the editor's care to point out its exemplary usefulness (...). Fantastic fiction, it seemed, could not compete with the realist novel on its own didactic territory" (Clery 80). Even if the tale, called *The Hermitage, A British Story*, "sunk without a trace", it is likely that the young Lewis may have had the chance to read the unusual novel and add it to his personal reservoir of imagination for future use. We may think that an almost imperceptible but evident trace may be found in the term "hermitage"⁶³, which describes a beautiful (and dangerous) corner in Ambrosio's cloister.

Lewis was probably influenced by poets that described gloomy feelings and melancholy experiences, such as the Scot Robert Blair (1699-1746), whose poem *The Grave* (1743)⁶⁴ is part of an epigraph in *The Monk*. Lewis's imagination was probably affected by the Graveyard Poets. "O Fear, I know thee by my throbbing heart," was line forty-two of a poem that became a *motto* for all Gothic writers, no matter what their stylistic differences might have been. Collins had composed the *Ode to Fear* in 1746, following the usual classical Greek structure of strophe, epode and antistrophe. The poem represents a mixture of elegant classical versification and themes instilled with a new form of sensibility, conveying dark imagery. Most importantly, Lewis was influenced by Radcliffe even though he did not approve of her work integrally.⁶⁵ He admitted that *The Mysteries of Udolpho* had impressed him (Baron Wilson; Lévy; Kilgour; J. Watt; Ellis). He had been exalted by Radcliffe's novel and the story had affected him to such a point that he had felt like the embodiment of one of the characters.⁶⁶ Also *The Romance of the Forest* can be included in the list of imaginative suggestions, even though there is a general tendency to define Lewis's work as a direct consequence of the *Mysteries of Udolpho* (Hogle, Punter, Botting, Miles, Clery, Lévy, and Townshend).⁶⁷ One technical analogy between the two authors is that they both use the term 'romance' either in the title (Radcliffe) or as a subtitle, whereas Beckford entirely ignored it. Their intention is to communicate that the reader is entering a different narratological dimension. Unlike Walpole, neither of them uses the term 'Gothic' in their titles, even though the word can be found in their narrations, however limited to a general architectural connotation.

As far as the extreme differences between Radcliffe and Lewis, some critics even go further by describing *The Monk* as the diabolical reverse image of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, forcing Radcliffe to create an adequate response, in her turn, a sort of reverse mirror of *The Monk* itself, with the publication of *The Italian* (1797). E. B. Murray claimed that Radcliffe's imitators "added sex to her lily-white sensationalism and thereby eliminated the Radcliffean delicacy of sentiment which consistently saved her heroine from a fate worse than death" (19). Todd claims that *The Monk* killed Radcliffe's literary career and forced the great enchantress⁶⁸ into permanent silence. She even posits that Antonia's rape by Ambrosio was an actual rape of Radcliffe's art by Lewis (255-256).⁶⁹ Radcliffe's mysterious life does not allow us to confirm or reject this hypothesis and her subsequent neglect of writing cannot be accounted for in a satisfactory mode.⁷⁰ Curiously, Groom's recent introduction to the latest edition of *The Monk* continues the tendency⁷¹ to "narrativize anxieties" in critical terms (Rintoul 704). Kilgour had underlined "the monstrous dimensions of Gothic criticism" (221). Baldick and Mighall claimed that "Gothic criticism is condemned to repeat what it has failed to understand so reproduces in its own discourse what we call the trope of Gothicizing the past" (210), an idea which is supported by Fitzgerald who finds "striking resemblances" between the language of the novel and the language of Gothic criticism (44).

If Beckford's *Vathek* is not generally considered a direct source for Lewis, it is not possible to exclude this work completely for its colourful inventions, and its *pastiche* mode.⁷² Moreover, Beckford seemed to share many elements with Lewis as R. Hume highlighted in his article. Beckford and Lewis

came from a rich social background, had a classical education, and travelled extensively.⁷³ The “Grand Tour” Beckford had set on had taken him to the same places that were later visited by Lewis. They had learnt Latin, Greek and were imbued with classical literature. Both were fluent in French and Italian.⁷⁴ They entered politics as Members of Parliament, sharing the same seat for Hindon, Wiltshire, Lewis taking up the post from Beckford when the latter left it (Baron Wilson I: 196, Peck 43, Ellis 107, McEvoy xxxvii). Another element in common could be their latent homosexuality, in turn ignored (Scott) denied (Baron Wilson, Peck), considered sceptically (Groom), or exposed (Summers⁷⁵, Haggerty “Queer Gothic”; Napier, Dan J. McNutt, Miles *Gothic Writing*; Williams *Art of Darkness*, Ellis).⁷⁶ The hedonist Beckford had married but was always on the brink of scandal, being forced to leave England on many occasions to avoid dangerous consequences, while for Lewis it was “an open secret”, according to Miles (“Ann Radcliffe and Matthew Lewis” 44).⁷⁷ However, the major scandal in which Lewis was involved did not concern his private sexual life but *The Monk*, which was to determine his future life. Although he published the fourth expurgated edition of *The Monk* in 1798 to avoid any potentially dangerous legal procedures, the mark of infamy, blasphemy and obscenity was to accompany him for years to come.

Lewis’s profound admiration for Walpole and Shakespeare was a further characteristic that he shared with Ann Radcliffe. Moreover, Lewis inherited Walpole’s love for what Clery calls “hybridism”, which probably played an important role for the development of the young writer’s plots. The taste for assembling together different narrative modes and models can be traced back in

The Castle of Otranto. The alternating introduction of semi-farcical situations, such as the verbose servants who slow down the action with their useless blabbering, is inherited from Walpole and Radcliffe, and is actually an imitation of Shakespeare's mixing of genres. Lewis's technique shows his need to blend tragic and comic issues.⁷⁸ One of the most evident analogies with Shakespeare in *The Monk* is the exposing of man's lethal hypocrisy. Ambrosio is similar to Angelo, in *Measure for Measure*.

In *Art of Darkness*, Williams underlines the reverence that Walpole had shown for the tragic Greeks that he wanted to honour by writing *The Mysterious Mother*, a dark story of incest following Aeschylus's example of the unnatural, however unconscious, love between a mother and her son. Lewis's admiration for the Classics was equally strong. Defined as the typical Gothic (Punter *Literature of Terror*, Botting *Gothic*, Wagner, Cooper) and the atypical Gothic novel (J. Watt 101) as well, Lewis's work is complex and characterized by a refined cultural melange. The young writer's readings, united with a rich cultural background and an education, which included knowledge of Greek, Latin and Italian Classics, contributed to the creation of his complex literary achievement.

4.7. Eighteenth Century and Classical Discourse

Lord Kames addressed the preface of his *Elements of Criticism* to King George III in 1761. Kames reinforced his commitment to the aesthetic of civic humanism. Having identified a lack in the nation's education, he proposed the "support of the arts evinced by Ancient Greece" ("The Eye of Power"18). The impact of Locke's theory of the senses had brought about the "ideal presence" philosophical precept, exalted by Kames, founded on the primacy of sight and

the importance of memory. This theory may partially clarify the growing importance of the “visual” in eighteenth-century art and literature. According to Kames, the emphasis on Ancient Greece’s ideals could contribute to the improvement of national education by means of the “Ideal Presence”. Classical culture was still a symbol of knowledge, and was deemed to improve society. Kames desired to transmit this form of elevated culture to all social classes. Nevertheless, his allegations were idealistic but difficult to put into practice as Classicism was intrinsic to upper-class education.

In the changing flux of history and literature, scholars in Europe and in Britain had steadily exalted the importance of Antiquity, which could be appreciated in the original form or in translations during all the decades of the eighteenth century⁷⁹. Pope, Addison, Steele, S. Johnson, among others, considered the Classics as a never-ending source for literary creations. Addison is coincidentally one of the writers mentioned in the prologue to the novel, called “Advertisement to *The Monk*”⁸⁰, which represented a formal, however incomplete, confession of the sources Lewis had used. The “advertisement” was probably meant to justify the plagiarisms in the text that he artificially simplified in just four works.⁸¹ One of them was the short story of *The Santon Barsisa*, published on 31 August 1713 in *The Guardian*, number 148. It is an anecdote (originally called “apophthegm”) on human hypocrisy.⁸² The story is about a holy man, called “santon” Barsisa, a hermit of moral perfection. One day he requested that the Caliph’s daughter, seriously ill, be brought to his cavern. In fact, the old man had secretly been advised by the devil in person to enjoy her beautiful body while she was unconscious. After his lustful act, Barsisa killed the

girl, but he was discovered and condemned to death. He asked the devil for help while climbing the gibbet. Despite his promise to save him, the devil took his soul but let him die (Addison 296-300). The short moral fable was meant as a meditation on falsity as well as the pernicious influence of devilish forces, even in the best human beings. It also shows the imperceptible but steady line that unites different writers and currents throughout the eighteenth century.⁸³

Recent critical analyses have encountered difficulties separating the neoclassical Augustan age, the Enlightenment, Pre-Romanticism and Romanticism. Traditional delimitations of the various literary waves are becoming less clear-cut insofar as research progresses and discovers new unexpected analogies between authors that originally seemed incompatible. A further confirmation of the deep connection between apparently incompatible literary movements has been provided by the analysis of Addison's articles in *The Spectator* "devoted to exploring the imagination (Nos 411-21), which attempt to build an aesthetic upon Locke's distinctions between primary and secondary qualities of objects and between real and nominal essences" (Walmsley 44). Even more interesting is the fact that "The confluence of concerns – death, imagination(...) – pervade *The Spectator*, as both Addison and Steele return again and again, to themes of ghosts, the good death, and appropriate mourning" (45). Interestingly, what we discover is that imagination, which was both a philosophical development and an inheritance from the Ancient Classics, actually dominated the eighteenth century and not only the Gothic or the Romantic period. I would argue that the Gothic was one of most evident consequences of that latent passion for mystery, which was however imbued with Classicism.

The British Augustan Age and the French Enlightenment brought about new scientific, philosophical, cultural, and literary masterpieces but at the same time promoted the appreciation of great works belonging to Antiquity and to other periods such as the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. Dante, Boccaccio, Ariosto were recognized to be great literary role-models belonging to an ideal era that was still considered as a single period, without the distinctions that were determined during the nineteenth century.⁸⁴

Lewis's desire to shock and frighten was not only derived from British and European literary figures that had dominated the eighteenth century but was also determined by tragic classical contexts that he had studied in his formative years. That classical inspiration was essential for writing was reiterated by various authors and essayists of the time. William Duff praised the Antiquity Muse in his *Essay on Genius* written in 1767 (Duff, Miles, *Gothic Writing*).⁸⁵ Lessing's unfinished study on classical art (and indirectly classical literature), *The Laocoon*, highlighted the relevance of classical representation: "The painter should study more precisely the work of the best painter among poets, of the poet who had the best descriptive talent, Homer, whose work is like a second nature because of its perfect representation of nature" (91). The painter had to imitate the greatest painters of all, who actually were the poets. Lessing claimed that the unparalleled beauty of ancient Greek and Roman architecture could only be challenged by Homer, Virgil and other classical authors' rare and superior beauty.⁸⁶ Winckelmann's works on Greek and Latin Antiquity had exalted the precious teachings of the Classics and launched the germ of Neo-classicism. Being part of the affluent elite, Lewis was not exempt from the cultural force of

the Classics. It is true that he may have received multiple cultural influences both at home and abroad. However, his basic mental structure was moulded by the knowledge of classical authors.

4.8. The Dialectics of Antiquity and the Impact of Ancient Drama

The Monk intrinsically reveals that classical learning had a preponderant weight; Ambrosio, Elvira and Antonia are therefore united by a tragic fate. The chain of guilt cast upon the three characters is complicated. Apart from marrying above her social level, Elvira abandoned her first-born Ambrosio, and transformed him into an orphan, destined to years of solitude in a monastery. Williams considers this aspect the source of Ambrosio's unconscious hate and desire for revenge, making him a Gothic version of a tragic *Oedipus*. This fatality is one of the successive tragic mistakes that involve Elvira's responsibility for her family's destiny. She is equally guilty towards her daughter because the girl's education is based on censorship that dooms her to dangerous ignorance of the world cruelty. Because of her linguistic and social dumbness, Antonia becomes insensitive to clearly uttered messages that concern her.⁸⁷ The tragic family circle succumbs to Ambrosio destroying his own blood - a terrible predestination that the hypocrisy of "void repentance", as Williams and Napier call it, does not preserve from final horror. The three characters' fate involves three different aspects: distorted religiosity, undue appropriation of a higher social position, and tragic mythology.

Distorted religiosity can be found in Ann Radcliffe as well, where some members of the Catholic clergy are intrinsically connected with horrid crimes. Raymond and Lorenzo's future spouses, Agnes and Virginia, are saved because

they do not take the veil and escape the religious order that had tried to entangle them. Elvira, Antonia and Ambrosio's extreme religiosity turns them into scapegoats for their own beliefs.⁸⁸

The second point is about social origin.⁸⁹ Daniel Watkins identifies the reason for Ambrosio's dramatic fall in his desire to change his position in the social hierarchy. The monk takes a series of progressive steps, which lead him to his fatal doom (213). Ambrosio's social roots are low and his being the Capuchin Monastery Abbot is an undeserved task.⁹⁰ Moreover, the moral superiority that had entitled him to his position in the highest religious ranks is destroyed by his own sins. Strangely, Watkins's analysis does not mention that Ambrosio is not alone in his fall and he only focuses on Ambrosio's punishment. The tragic *dénouement* takes place after a successive series of unspeakable horrors, where words cannot be uttered: they are blocked and untold, a hidden poison that becomes manifest when it is too late. Elvira is strangled before she can utter her truth; Antonia is stabbed before she can ask for help, and Ambrosio spends his last torturous hours in a desert, unheard by other human beings. Elvira, Antonia and Ambrosio are reunited in life as well in their tragic deaths. They are destiny's gruesome victims of a fatal doom. We may well claim that all three characters actually committed a sort of social crime, which was the desire to be part of a higher level on the social ladder. Their trespassing has its counterpart in a violent fall. Elvira tried to elevate her position as a shoemaker's daughter by marrying a noble family's heir; Antonia is guilty in desiring the aristocratic Lorenzo; and Ambrosio is guilty for holding a position which he would not be granted if his low origins were known. Lewis's narrative decision to punish the three characters in

the most violent way seems to be a form of cruel social justice, which might reflect latent class prejudice. This explanation may cast a different light on Lewis's novel.⁹¹ My point is that Lewis's conclusion may represent the affirmation of aristocratic values and the return of an ideal *status quo*, going backwards in history, getting rid of democratic threats and rejecting the revolutionary European present.⁹²

The third important point is classical prominence in the work. The matricide scene is disturbing, conveying gory details that are thrown at the readers, surrounded by an aura of excessive naturalism. The genesis of *The Monk's* horrible scenes is not simply dictated by juvenile inexperience or a kind of provocative experimentation. I would argue that the mother's murder transcend the novel boundaries to travel back in place and time in order to reach the tragic *locus* of a mythical past. My claim is that Lewis created horrid images that could be found in Greek tragedies.

4.9. Euripides and Greek Drama

Aristotle considered *pathos* as tragedy's essential ingredient. Lewis does not follow all Aristotelian rules strictly. However, the horror of events that progressively degenerate into a final catastrophe involving innocent victims complies with the Aristotelian dictum. Lewis also adheres to Seneca's dramatic criterion, which includes spirits and entities, necessary to strengthen the sense of inevitable calamity that cannot be controlled by humans.⁹³

The Monk is shocking for its sudden changes of register: comic moments are followed by frightening occurrences. Brooks' statement is illuminating (255): "And as happens more than once in *The Monk*, the forces which we deny, mock,

put down, are precisely those that assert their reality and smite at us (a situation familiar to Euripides)". Coincidentally, the playwright mentioned by Brooks, Euripides⁹⁴, seems to play a major role in Lewis's most tragic circumstances. Together with Aeschylus and Sophocles, Euripides is part of the great dramatic triad of Ancient Greece. After Dryden's critically acclaimed adaptation of *Oedipus*, which remained in the repertory for various decades, "several turn-of-the-century playwrights followed Dryden and Nathaniel Lee in rewriting Greek tragedians, mainly Euripides" (Paulina Kewes 247). Euripides offered what audiences particularly appreciated, "*pathos* and women in distress" (248) - two points that are developed in the Gothic and in Lewis's text.⁹⁵

Matricide is a dramatic feature, which was not uncommon in Greek tradition. In particular, Euripides' *Electra* presents Orestes murdering his mother Clytemnestra out of revenge. Even though Orestes consciously plans the murder to honour his father's heroic and political figure as an inevitable vengeance, the abomination of his act has an appalling emotional impact. As far as Ambrosio is concerned, although his crime is provoked by his delirious passion, the murder scene contains the perception of ineluctable fate.⁹⁶ Unlike Orestes, Ambrosio is not conscious of true nature of his murder, which he wrongly feels is abruptly determined by his lustful anxiety to have carnal intercourse with the one he does not recognize as his sister. In the end, both characters are punished for their crimes: Orestes is pursued by the Erinyes, whereas Ambrosio is tormented by hideous insects.

Matricide and incest turn the characters into highly dramatic figures. They are the manifestations of ill-fated predestination, where ancestors' crimes

are transmitted to their scions.⁹⁷ Elvira's guilt is passed down to her children. In his complexity, Ambrosio is also a Gothic version of Sophocles' *Oedipus Rex*, because he is symbolically blind when he can see, and is physically blind during his final torment when he discovers the terrible truth. He is also a reversed version of Sophocles' tragic hero because he kills the mother instead of the father. The desire for the mother's body, which is unconsciously felt by the Greek hero, is not present in Ambrosio. The aspect that Oedipus and Ambrosio share is the lack of recognition of the parental connection. Oedipus kills the tyrant (the father) and marries the woman (the mother) to bring order to society whereas he unconsciously actually unchains disorder and despair. Despite its tragic intensity, Ambrosio's act is not heroic. Orestes consciously kills his mother to honour and avenge his father's memory, unchaining chaos and the gods' fury. While Lewis describes every gesture of Ambrosio's murder, Euripides does not show the act directly. Clytemnestra has entered her house after a long explanatory dialogue with her daughter. Orestes goes inside the house and the public can simply hear his mother's cries of despair:

<i>Chorus</i>	Heard you in the house her cry?
<i>Clytem</i>	Ah, me, ah me!
<i>Chorus</i>	I too lament thy fate, Fall'n by the children's hands. Th'avenging god Dispenses justice when occasion calls. Dreadful thy punishment; but dreadful deeds, Unhappy, 'gainst thy husband did'st thou dare. Stained with their mother's recent-streaming blood, See, from the house they come, terrible proof

Of ruthless slaughter. (*Electra* 192)

The tragedy unfolds when the mother, the daughter and the son are reunited after years of separation.⁹⁸ Euripides' drama stresses the fatality of parents and ancestors' sins. Clytemnestra has betrayed and killed her husband Agamemnon. Her crime is evident and her punishment inevitable. Elvira, conversely, is presented as an innocent victim and her sacrifice is incomprehensible. However, we may argue that her fault is of a moral nature. Elvira's choices had baneful consequences: she abandoned Ambrosio, when still a baby, thus causing his life in solitude, and kept Antonia dangerously ignorant and separated from the one person that could protect her. Ambrosio acts unconsciously against the mother he did not recognize and destroys the sister he did not acknowledge. He is a tragic hero but is not entitled to tragic nobility.

There are further classical elements in *The Monk* and they are varied and complex. Euripides' prominence can be found once more in the central tale within the tale, "*un roman à tiroirs*" according to Brooks (256), which is represented by Raymond's narration of his story to his friend Lorenzo. After a dangerous adventure in the forest "cottage", the young aristocrat manages to escape from a risky situation and save a Duchess and her niece. The Duchess's misinterpretation of Raymond's amorous interest, originally seen as an amusing episode in the style of Marivaux's comedies, acquires a tragic tone when the deceived Duchess becomes a cruel antagonist, partially moulded on Euripides' Phaedra in *Hippolytus*.⁹⁹ Her desire to destroy Raymond resembles Phaedra's cruel fury, ready to punish the contemptuously indifferent Hippolytus who has rejected her love. Donna Rodolpha's rage suddenly replaces her loving feeling

just as the Maenads suddenly unchain their violence against Pentheus in *The Bacchae*, also by Euripides.¹⁰⁰ Whereas the Bacchae are guided by a supernatural power, the Duchess is controlled by her cruelty.

Hippolytus, unjustly disgraced, and Ambrosio, justly punished, are different as the former is apparently innocent and the latter is guilty. They are united in a similar traumatic *finale*. While riding his chariot away from his country after his father Theseus exiled him, Hippolytus is followed by a dangerous mythical creature sent by Venus and Poseidon. The monstrous creature throws him down the side of high mountains. Hippolytus' flesh is beaten and bruised, he is covered in blood and his suffering is immense. So is Ambrosio, "thrown upon steep mountains", left to die a miserable death, "blind, maimed, helpless and despairing" (Lewis 442). Unquestionably, Hippolytus and Ambrosio's horrid deaths are similar. The Euripidean influence played an important role in the creation of Lewis's cruel tragedy. Hippolytus's final moment is narrated by a group of men who were accompanying him in his exile, forced by his enraged father¹⁰¹:

So we made our way
Up toward the desert region, where the bay
Curls to a promontory near the verge
Of our Trozên, facing the southward surge
Of Saron's gulf. Just there an angry sound,
Slow-swelling, like God's thunder underground,
Broke on us, and we trembled. (Hippolytus 62)

Hippolytus is approaching a solitary "desert region". He is riding his chariot as if he is flying to separate himself from his father and his land. The strange and

frightening “sound”¹⁰² announces supernatural agents that are going to envelop the victim. Ambrosio, by contrast, is taken to the desert by a demon who carries him towards his horrendous death.

Then straight upon the team wild terror fell.
Howbeit, the Prince, cool-eyed and knowing well
Each changing mood a horse has, gripped the reins;
Coiled them around his body; and then, as strains
A sailor backward 'gainst his oar, so swung
Back in the chariot straining. (62-63)

A formidable hunter and expert rider, Hippolytus is convinced that he can control nature and face the dramatic chains of events threatening him. Before being captured by the Inquisition, Ambrosio, strangely assured that he can overcome all incidents until he is carried away by the demonic being, shares Hippolytus' tranquillity before the tragedy.

But the young
Wild steeds bit hard the curb, and fled afar;
Nor rein nor guiling hand nor morticed car
Stayed them at all. For when he veered them round,
And aimed their flying feet to grassy ground,
In front uprose that Thing, and turned again
The four great coursers, terror-mad. But when
Their blind rage drove them toward the rocky places,
Silent, and ever nearer to the traces,
It followed, rockward, till one wheel-edge grazed,
The chariot tript and flew, and all was mazed
In turmoil. Up went the wheel-box with a din,

Where the rock jagged, and nave and axle-pin. (63)

A monstrous devilish creature has appeared in the form of a bull to punish Hippolytus for his blasphemy. The young man is at the mercy of the savage creature. Horror and terror become the dominant factors. The young man had been actively reacting against dark forces but now loses control. He turns into a passive victim, like Ambrosio.

And there – the long reins him – there was he

Dragging, entangled irretrievably.

A dear head battering at the chariot side,

Sharp rocks, and ripped flesh, and a voice that cried:

Dash me not into nothing! (...)

All beside,

The steeds, the Horned Horror of the Tide,

Had vanished – who knows where? – in that wild land. (64)

Hippolytus' tragic destiny is brutally accomplished. Euripides' progression of the dramatic scenes is based on desolate landscapes, whose outline recalls the place where Ambrosio draws his last breath. Lewis imitates Euripides' description of Hippolytus' violent death. The supernatural atmosphere brought about by devilish creatures confirms the analogies between the two young men's terrifying end. Hippolytus has not committed the hideous crimes that Ambrosio has perpetrated. However, in the eyes of the divinity, his actions were sacrilegious because he did not show respect for Venus' commandments. A strange paradox can be found in their different crimes as Hippolytus is guilty for not loving and rejecting passion, whereas Ambrosio is guilty because he has given in to an excess of love that has turned him mad and murderous.

An interesting minor episode in Raymond's plot, a sort of interlude between the adventure with the Bleeding Nun and the return to Madrid, further confirms the reference to Greek literature. It concerns Raymond's servant, "page" Theodore's poetical composition. After the master has listened to the verses, he makes an interesting comment. The passage is not only a meta-literary meditation but it is also an ironic passage, imitating Sterne and Fielding's parodic style:

Your little poem pleases me much [...]. An Author whether good or bad, or between both, is an Animal whom everybody is privileged to attack; For though All are not able to write books, all conceive themselves able to judge them. A bad composition carries with it its own punishment, contempt and ridicule. A good one excites envy, and entails upon its Author a thousand mortifications. He finds himself assailed by partial and ill-humored criticism: One Man finds fault with the plan, another with the style, a Third with the precept, which it strives to inculcate; and they who cannot succeed in finding fault with the Book, employ themselves in stigmatizing its Author". (199)

Theodore's poem "Love and Age" is made in imitation of the Greek Anacreon. Whereas Macdonald (*Monk Lewis* 187) has analysed the scene to refer to Lewis's homosexuality, my intention is to show that influence of Greek literature permeates various parts of the work.

Greek was among the subjects that Lewis had studied but it is not possible to know whether he read the work in Greek or in translation. Kewes explains that "in contrast to classical poetry and prose, which were translated for

scribal and print publication, classical drama was in this period rendered in English to be performed” (240). Apparently, the Greeks were less known than the Latins: “Roman plays were more accessible, better known, and more frequently translated and adapted than Greek ones” (241). Kewes also specifies that while Aristophanes was not completely translated until the nineteenth century, the “tragic triumvirate of Aeschylus, Sophocles, and Euripides, on the other hand, steadily grew in stature. By the mid-1780s their entire *oeuvre* was accessible to the English reader, and their assimilation to the corpus of translated literature had become one of the major developments of the reception of the Classics in the period. By the end of the eighteenth century, virtually all extant classical drama, with the exception of Aristophanes, was available in English in a variety of modes (literal versions, paraphrases, free imitations) and media (rhyming couplets, prose, and blank verse)” (241). It may be plausible that Lewis read the original Greek pieces and translated them as a linguistic exercise, which was common in the didactic process of the period, but it could equally be possible that he had the chance of consulting English versions of the Greek dramatists. Being a theatre *aficionado*, as can be evinced from his correspondence and also his later production, it is probable that he had seen more than one classical tragedy.

4.10. Latin Literature and Ovidian Moments

Latin literature was studied and in use among poets and writers in the eighteenth century. Both Beckford and Radcliffe had used elements belonging to Latin literature in their works. Lewis’s Latin borrowings might be easily perceived in his work. The first lines of the novel are in Latin, from a Horatian epigraph.

Latin sentences were a rhetorical convention used during the Augustan period and also later on¹⁰³: “Somnia, terrors, magicos, miracula, fagas, nocturnas lemurs, portentaque” (1). The words warn the reader and evoke magic and terror. A further interesting example is a poem in English in imitation of Horace’s style (3-4), representing the introduction to the story. The stanzas of the poem are offered to the book and its destiny, as well to the author, a dedication in vogue at the time of Horace, Virgil, Ovid and other important Latin poets. The short compositions generally expressed a desire for a good reception. They were also meant as an excuse for the possible flaws in the work. The focus of Lewis’s introductory poem is first about the effects on the public. Then he formulates two hypotheses about the future of his book, one negative and one positive. Finally, the author introduces his persona, both physically and emotionally. The conclusion is a request for forgiveness in consideration of his young age. Choosing Horace (65 – 8 BC) may not be coincidental, as the Latin poet was an important cultural reference, especially appreciated by Augustan writers for his satirical tones and his impeccable stylistic elegance. He used to speak about himself with irony and good humour in his works even if the truth is never really revealed.¹⁰⁴ Horace was a contemporary of Virgil (70-19 BC) and occasionally met the younger Ovid (43 BC-12 AD). Mentioning Horace is a rhetorical device and also a strategy that Lewis uses to be recognized and accepted among other more mature and renowned writers.

Williams claims that Pope had described gloomy landscapes and dark situations that were more suitable for Romantic contexts than for an Augustan poet. Pope had been inspired by Ovid’s *Heroic Epistles* and had used them in the

poem *Eloisa to Abelard* (1688), dedicated to the epilogue of the famous lovers' story. Williams underlines that Eloisa is "inconsistent and irrational". Sometimes she seems "hysterical, subject to fantasies of an almost psychotic intensity" (*Art of Darkness* 52). Pope's descriptions are paramount. He used the dark Ovidian melancholy and adapted it to a desperate situation. Besides, Pope shows that one of the sad story protagonists, who is condemned to live inside the walls of a convent, manifests psychotic attitudes. Coincidentally, Pope's synthesis of the Ovidian melancholy in Eloisa's altered psychological state is envisaged in Ambrosio.

His cultural background allowed Lewis to read and translate the Classics. He may also have used Ovid's "englished"¹⁰⁵ versions, which were frequent and appreciated. References to Ovid in *The Monk* are not as explicit as in Richardson's *Clarissa*. Richardson's characters are compared to gods, goddesses and mythological characters from *The Metamorphoses*¹⁰⁶ on various occasions.¹⁰⁷ Murray explains that "when in *Clarissa* Richardson represented sexual struggles between the powerful and the powerless, he borrowed and adapted characters, situations, and meaning from the culturally approved treatments of the theme: the numerous Greek and Roman accounts of a god raping, or attempting to rape a mortal" (116). Murray claims that even *Pamela* (1740) contains a strong influence from Ovid. He considers Richardson's young protagonist as a metaphor of Psyche, the girl who is first loved by Cupid, and then becomes a goddess herself. Pamela's social ascension is comparable to a mythological apotheosis.¹⁰⁸

Lewis does not use clear similes but inserts the mythological context in subtle ways.¹⁰⁹ Although it is not easily detectable, classical presence is pervasive in *The Monk*. Some episodes contain contexts and characters that have their equivalent in Ovid. Intriguingly, all of these episodes concern Ambrosio. The first one is developed in the second chapter of the First Volume (40-41). When Ambrosio is alone in his cell, he starts admiring the beautiful image of a Madonna, decorating the wall, who seems to be smiling at him.¹¹⁰ The moment of adoration is religious but turns into a pagan form of exaltation through the process¹¹¹ of *ekphrasis*, which is instrumental to Ambrosio's sexual exaltation.¹¹² What is important here, apart from the criticism of the Catholic Church and the superficial adoration of images, is that Ambrosio expresses the desire to make the image become real.¹¹³ Even more extraordinary, the monk obtains what he was intimately asking for. In fact, the Madonna is embodied in Matilda. The result of the religious man's latent erotic raving in front of the Renaissance image is the appearance of a real human being, embodied in the fake novice Rosario, Matilda's alias.

The tempting image seems to materialize out of the frame to assume the form of a perturbingly beautiful woman. Thus Lewis reproduces Pygmalion's story, narrated in the tenth book of Ovid's work, by adding a deeper level of incertitude. He actually inlays the episode in a context of ambiguous personation.¹¹⁴ What Pygmalion has in common with Ambrosio is that he is disgusted and offended by women's licentiousness. Therefore he prefers living alone without a wife¹¹⁵:

Pygmalion, loathing their lascivious life,

Abhorre'd all womankind, but most a wife;
So single chose to live, and shunn'd to wed,
Well pleased to want a consort of his bed;
Yet fearing idleness, the nurse of ill,
In sculpture exercised his happy skill,
And carved in ivory such a maid, so fair,
As nature could not with his art compare,
Were she to work; but in her own defence,
Must take her pattern here, and copy hence.

(Metamorphoses, X, 343-350; 17)

It is a form of misogyny, which seems to be shared by Ambrosio on several occasions.¹¹⁶ By rejecting the company of women, Pygmalion dedicates himself to art and sculpture and lives in a sort of monastic seclusion. He creates a statue of such ethereal and superior beauty that he falls in love with it. While embracing its white perfect body made of ivory, kissing its lips and touching its sensuous breast and limbs, he prays the Goddess Venus for a miracle. He would like the statue to become a real woman. Most of all, he would like the statue to love him¹¹⁷:

Pleased with his idol, he commends, admires,
Adores, and last, the thing adored desires:
A very virgin in her face was seen,
And had she moved, a living maid had been:
One would have thought she could have stirr'd, but strove
With modesty, and was ashamed to move:
Art hid with art, so well perform'd the cheat,
It caught the carver with his own deceit. (X, 351-359; 17)

The passage presents some interesting points. Pygmalion may be interpreted here as Ambrosio's antecedent as he lives the secluded life of a hermit. Moreover, he rejects the company of all women. Art preserves his purity and does not allow vice to become part of his life. In the same way, Ambrosio originally dedicates himself to religion and to intellectual activities in the monastery. The difference lies in the fact that he has not painted the image he loves, but has received it as a mysterious gift. The statue Pygmalion creates is characterized by two special aspects: one is supreme beauty, and the other is modesty. These two characteristics can be found in the beautiful Matilda and in the sweet Antonia respectively. It is as if Pygmalion's statue is embodied in the two different, equally marvellous entities.

He knows 'tis madness, yet he must adore,
And still the more he knows it, loves the more.
The flesh, or what so seems, he touches soft;
Fired with this thought, at once he strain'd the breast
And on the lips a loving kiss impress'd.

(X, 360-365; 18)

Ambrosio loves the image in the painting and expresses the same desire to see it come to life. He prays God to make his desire come true. What Ambrosio exclaims is similar to the words uttered by Pygmalion and the desire he feels for the statue:

He fixed his eyes upon a picture of the Virgin, which was suspended opposite to him: This for two years had been the Object of his increasing wonder and adoration. He paused, and gazed upon it with delight. What beauty is in the

countenance!' (...) 'How graceful is the Turn of that head! What sweetness, yet what majesty in her divine eyes! How softly her cheek reclines upon her hand! Can the Rose vie with the blush of that cheek? Can the Lily rival the whiteness of the hand? Oh! If such a creature existed, and existed but for me! Were I permitted to twine round my fingers those golden ringlets, and press with my lips the treasures of that snowy bosom! (40-41)

The pagan Pygmalion addresses his prayer to the goddess of love whereas the religious Ambrosio implores his Christian God to satisfy his pagan adoration of an idol.

Pygmalion offering first approach'd the shrine,
And then with prayers implored the power divine:
Almighty gods, if all we mortals want,
If all we can require, be yours to grant,
Make this fair statue mine, he would have said,
But changed the words for shame, and only pray'd,
"give me the likeness of my ivory maid." (X, 392-8; 18)

The analogy between the two invocations is remarkable and it may be argued that Lewis had Ovid in mind when he was writing Ambrosio's adoring sentences. However, *The Monk* is drastically ambivalent as it includes Matilda's disturbing *double-face* character.¹¹⁸ Later on, Ambrosio observes Matilda's ivory hand. Lewis reiterates the impressive similarity with Ovid's version, where Pygmalion adores the whiteness of his ivory statue¹¹⁹: "his heart throbbed with desire, while his hand was pressed gently by Matilda's ivory fingers" (62).

After Ambrosio has rejected her, Matilda threatens to commit suicide. It is on that occasion that she uncovers her breast and “The Moon-beams darting full upon it, enabled the Monk to observe its dazzling whiteness” (65). Matilda’s body seems to retain the beautiful ivory whiteness, previously observed by Ambrosio in the Madonna image, which coincidentally corresponds to the colour of Pygmalion’s statue. Ambrosio’s discovery of Matilda’s body is a complex process. First he sees her hand and then her breast, but he cannot see her face yet. During the night “The image of his favourite Madona” appears in his sleep. What happens during his unconscious state seems to reproduce Pygmalion’s experience with his statue. “He pressed his lips to hers, and found them warm: The animated form started from the Canvas, embraced him affectionately, and his senses were unable to support delight so exquisite” (67). In the following days Ambrosio discovers Matilda’s “coral lips” and “a Chin in whose dimples seemed to lurk a thousand Cupids”. Playing the harp, she uncovers an arm, “the delicacy of whose skin might have contended with snow in whiteness” (78). Then the revelation is complete when Matilda’s cowl falls back and Ambrosio can admire her face: “Her features became visible to the Monk’s inquiring eye. What was his amazement at beholding the exact resemblance of his admired Madona?”(81). Matilda represents the metamorphosis of the work of art into a human being. We might say that Ambrosio story is Ovid’s Pygmalion’s myth revisited.

The second Ovidian moment in the novel, which is one of the crucial episodes, takes place in the beautiful garden of the convent. Tranquil nature, perfumed flowers and crystalline water may represent the exaltation of

aesthetics, or a medieval philosophical symbolism for the centre of knowledge. It also features echoes of Vathek's sensual experiences and of Radcliffe's alluring descriptions of Adeline. The garden, in this way, becomes a place of dangerous sensuality.

One Ovidian episode evokes the ancient myth of Hermaphroditus. Salmacis, a solitary nymph, collects flowers¹²⁰ near a small pond, surrounded by trees and soft meadows when Hermaphroditus, Venus and Mercury's beautiful adolescent son, approaches the bucolic scene:

A river here he view'd, so lovely bright,
It show'd the bottom in a fairer light,
Nor kept a sand concealed from human sight:
The stream produced nor slimy ooze, nor weeds,
Nor miry rushes, nor the spiky reeds,
But dealt enriching moisture all around,
The fruitful banks with cheerful verdure crown'd,
And kept the spring eternal on the ground.
A nymph presides, not practiced in the chase,
Nor skilful at the bow, nor at the race ;(...)
Now in the limpid stream she views her face,
And dress'd her image in the floating glass:
On beds of leaves she now reposed her limbs,
Now gather'd flowers that grew about her streams
(IV, 434-57; 114-115)

The *locus amoenus* reveals the quintessence of beauty and peace. However, it is the oxymoron of a terrifying tranquillity which announces terrible events. The

young man's appearance provokes an uncontrollable desire in the nymph who becomes an agent of destruction. In the same way, the apparently weak and delicate Matilda is going to seduce Ambrosio, and entangle him in her mysterious schemes.¹²¹

Nostalgic, lonely and striving for the unknown, Ambrosio goes to the beautiful cloister garden¹²² of the monastery, which offers a rare sublime and picturesque image of nature in the novel:

He descended into the Abbey-garden (...).The choicest flowers adorned it in the height of luxuriance, and though artfully arranged, seemed only planted by the hand of Nature: fountains, springing from basons of white Marble, cooled the air with perpetual showers; and the wall were entirely covered by Jessamin, vines, and Honey-suckles. The hour now added to the Beauty of the scene [...] the waters of the fountains sparkled in the silver beam: a gentle breeze breathed the fragrance of the Orange-blossoms along the Alleys. (50)

Ambrosio enters the peaceful place surrounded by a serene atmosphere in the same way as Hermaphroditus plunges into the pond. Both scenes highlight the sweetness of Nature and the extraordinary peace surrounding the *locus*. However, the calm atmosphere is only apparent. Ambrosio finds the novice Rosario who reveals her real feminine, sensuous nature and her love for him - a feeling that he initially rejects: “[...] recovering from his confusion, the Monk quitted the garden, and sped with precipitation towards the Abbey” (59). His escape from the woman is similar to Hermaphroditus's reaction when Salmacis introduces herself to the astonished boy and praises his beauty.¹²³ He is

surprised and flushes at the compliments. When the nymph tries to approach and embrace him, he asks her to stop or he will go away:

Now gather'd flowers that grew about her streams,
And then by chance was gathering, as she stood
To view the boy, and long'd for what she view'd.
Fain would she meet the youth with hasty feet,
She fain would meet him, but refused to meet
Before her looks were set with nicest care,
And well deserved to be reputed fair.
"Bright youth," she cries, "whom all thy features prove
A god, and, if a god, the god of love;
But if a mortal, bless'd thy nurse's breast,
Bless'd are thy parents, and thy sisters bless'd:
But O! How bless'd, how more than bless'd thy bride!
Allied in bliss, if any yet allied.
If so, let mine the stolen enjoyments be;
If not, behold a willing bride in me."
The boy knew not of love, and, touch'd with shame,
He strove, and blush'd, but still the blush became;
(...) He, innocently coy,
Replies, "O leave me to myself alone,
You rude incivil nymph, or I'll be gone." (IV, 457-483; 115)

Salmacis is as astute as Matilda when she tries to seduce Ambrosio. Whereas Matilda uses her arts strategically, Salmacis is anxious to have her desire fulfilled. Therefore Hermaphroditus is beguiled by the nymph who manages to make her embrace eternal. The two creatures becomes one ambiguous being, a strange

form uniting their male and female essences. Ovid explains that one may say the creature is both or neither of them.¹²⁴

“O may the gods thus keep us ever join’d!
O may we never, never part again!”
So pray’d the nymph, nor did she pray in vain:
For now she finds him, as his lips she press’d.
Grow nearer still, nearer to her breast,
Till, piercing each the other’s flesh, they run
Together, and incorporate in one:
Last, in one face are both their faces join’d,
As when the stock and grafted twig combined
Shoot up the same, and wear a common rind.

(Book IV, 507-516; 116)

We observe a mysterious change in both characters in *The Monk*: they undergo the process of feminization (Ambrosio) and masculinization (Matilda). Matilda’s strategy obliges the young man to discover physical joy and provokes a metamorphosis in him. The fact that Hermaphroditus and Salmacis become a single being¹²⁵ is intriguing and could be connected to the characters’ relationship in *The Monk*. Curiously, Ambrosio and Matilda are often together after the revelation of her identity. The impression is that they are a single entity. When other characters appear on the scene, Matilda seems to vanish or at least be invisible. The monk Ambrosio and the novice Rosario/Matilda give the impression of being but one person. A possible explanation of Matilda’s unfathomable indefiniteness could be that she exists in Ambrosio’s mind exclusively. A potential clue is provided by the fact that the monk is in a

“delirium” (*The Monk* 41) after he has been observing the Madonna painting with voluptuousness for a while when suddenly Rosario-Matilda appears at his cell door.¹²⁶ The gods’ decision to unite Hermaphoditus with Salmacis is inexplicable and unmotivated, just like Matilda’s obsessive presence that forcibly attaches Ambrosio to her devilish intentions.

The third strong analogy with Ovid is of a general nature and involves sexual abuse. *The Metamorphoses* introduce stories of gods and men who strongly desire to possess the women or men they are in love with, and are ready to use violence to achieve their goals. The violent actions of gods and humans, conveying extreme suffering, are reiterated in many episodes.¹²⁷ The horrible climatic moment of Antonia’s rape¹²⁸ recalls the violence against and the indifference towards the woman, considered as a victim and as an object. Jupiter is justified in his actions because he is the most important divinity. Pluto is taken by a sudden and violent passion as soon as he sees the young Proserpina, and he presently kidnaps her. The moment before the god’s abduction is suffused with delicate joy and is in profound contrast with the god’s furious desire, which resembles Ambrosio’s sexual frenzy:

Fresh fragrant breezes fan the verdant bowers,
And the moist ground smiles with enamell’d flowers:
The cheerful birds their airy carole sing,
And the whole year in one eternal spring.
Here while young Proserpine, among the maids,
Diverts herself in these delicious shades;
While, like a child, with busy speed and care,
She gathers lilies here, and violets there;

While first to fill her little lap she strives,
Hell's grisly monarch at the shade arrives;
Sees her sporting on the flowery green,
And loves the blooming maid as soon as seen.
His urgent flame impatient of delay,
Swift as his thought he seizes the beauteous prey,
And bore her in his sooty car away. (V, 594-608; 150-151)

Proserpina, who is Pluto's kin, is carried into the dark underworld to become his wife. The young woman invokes the help of her distant mother, Ceres, who cannot hear her. Proserpina is depicted as childish and innocent, and Antonia seems her perfect copy. Proserpina's mother tries to stop Pluto but is powerless, just like Elvira. The analogy with Proserpina's story is remarkably precise.

After administering "a juice [which] brings the exact image of Death" (329), Ambrosio leads Antonia to the subterranean dungeon to keep her forever with him in a place which is similar to Pluto's dark hell of the mythological tradition.¹²⁹ "The depths profound through yielding waves he cleaves, / And to hell's centre a free passage leaves; / Down sinks his chariot, and his realms of night/ The god soon reaches with a rapid flight" (Lines 642-5). Antonia is not only similar to Proserpina - her sad story recalls Creusa, the girl that Apollo seizes while she is collecting flowers. He abducts her and rapes her in a dark and frightening cave where nobody can see or hear her. As Murray explains "[m]any rape myths involve trickery and disguises" (117), just like the magic potion used by Ambrosio to trick Antonia and cause her doom.

Ovid's victims of rape are abandoned to a cruel destiny and only a metamorphosis can alleviate the pain. In the same way as Tereus, who decides to

cut out Philomela's tongue after raping her, to be sure his sister-in-law's violation cannot be discovered (*Metamorphoses*, VI), Ambrosio would like to silence Antonia so that she cannot reveal his abominable crime. The carnal desire and violence of both gods and men are reproduced in Ambrosio, whose ego is exalted by Matilda's apparent adoration.

It is not clear whether Lewis preferred to read the original versions of Ovid and Latin poets or if he chose translation. Ovid was a popular poet between the sixteenth and the eighteenth centuries, and his works were regularly rendered in English, starting from the Renaissance onwards. Tissol remarks that "[m]any of the best post-Restoration englishings of Ovid are collaborative in character and many reflect the dominant influence of John Dryden, whose own translations of Ovid were often ranked amongst his finest achievements" (204). In his *Arts of Logick and Rhetorick* (1728), the versatile historian, editor, and poet John Oldmixon (1673-1642) claimed that "Dryden seems to have entered as far into the Genius as any of his Translators" (291). Sir Samuel Garth's collective translation of *The Metamorphoses*, published in 1717, was a successful collaborative effort that united the versions of many poets and also included the verses translated by the late Dryden (206) that continued to be used during the whole century. My conclusion is that the Latin literary matrix, and especially Ovid, have played an important role in the creation of a novel made of miscellaneous cultural influences.¹³⁰

2.11. The Middle Ages, Boccaccio and Dante

Lewis's studies included Italian Medieval and Renaissance authors.¹³¹ In one of the many letters written to his mother, he mentions that his sister is

learning Italian and he hopes she will progress quickly (Baron Wilson I:112). Apart from Greek and Latin, Lewis also knew Italian and translated from it, as some of his later works demonstrate.¹³² Gray, Beckford, Walpole, and Radcliffe knew Dante, Boccaccio and the great Renaissance authors such as Ariosto¹³³ and Tasso. Although Lewis only went to Italy after his father's death in 1812, when he abandoned writing to travel to the Continent, he already had a good cultural knowledge of the country and its literature.

Elements of Italian authors can be traced in *The Monk*. Boccaccio's influence can be detected even though Lewis's novel is basically tragic whereas the stories in the *Decameron* generally have a happy ending or a morally positive one. The collection of *novellas* also contains stories of libertine monks or fake priests entering convents to enjoy a lustful life in secret and protected promiscuity hidden inside monasteries - a fact which provoked the Church's formal ban and saw the masterpiece prohibited for centuries. Day one and day three of the collection present short stories where the clergy is described as corrupt and/or lubricious. The first *novella* of the third day introduces Masetto's story, a handsome young man who, pretending to be deaf and mute, could live happily in a convent, working as a gardener, eating abundantly and enjoying secret meetings with the nuns. The general comic effect is lost in the tales belonging to the fourth day dedicated to unfortunate love stories, which do not resonate with the rest of the *Decameron*. The tales' gory details contain disturbing scenes. We may argue that they anticipate themes of horror more suitable for the Gothic genre. The fourth day's first story offers the cruellest examples of unrestrained patriarchal power. When Ghismonda's jealous

father¹³⁴ forces her to drink from a cup containing her lover's heart¹³⁵, she fills it with poison. Lisabetta of Messina is victimized by her ruthless brothers who kill her lover because of his inferior social status. The supernatural, which is otherwise uncommon in *The Decameron*, is included in the story when the dead protagonist appears in the girl's dreams and reveals where to find his body. Unlike the characters in *The Monk*, who do not possess the cognitive force to understand supernatural messages, Lisabetta follows her dead lover's instructions.¹³⁶

A rare supernatural event can be found in one of the *novellas*, dealing with happy endings in love, narrated during the fifth day. A woman covered in blood is running at great speed in the middle of the forest near Ravenna, where the young protagonist Nastagio degli Onesti has taken refuge. Being rejected by his haughty lover, he decides to live in solitude and muse about her. This *novella* was translated by Dryden and inserted in his collection of *Tales Ancient and Modern* (1700).¹³⁷ As in many other cases, Dryden changed the protagonist's name and added gruesome details to the narration. Nastagio, Theodore in Dryden's version, is frightened to death and believes that the furious lady may represent a danger when he realizes that the woman and the knight, who pursues and kills her, are both ghosts. The protagonist discovers that the horrible scene must be repeated incessantly. The context preceding the terrifying tableau is translated using words that transmit the horror in Boccaccio's story and would be suitable for a tale of terror in the Gothic style:

While list'ning to the murm'ring Leaves he stood,
More than a Mile immers'd within the Wood,

At once the Wind was laid: the whisp'ring sound
Was dumb; a rising Earthquake rock'd the ground:
With deeper Brown the grove was overspread:
A suddain Horror seiz'd his giddy Head,
And his ears tinckled, and his Colour fled
Nature was in alarm; some Danger nigh
Seem'd threaten'd, though unseen to mortal Eye:
Unus'd to fear, he summon'd all his Soul
And stood collected in himself, and whole;
Not long: for soon a Whirlwind rose around,
And from afar he heard a screaming sound,
As of a Dame distress'd, who cry'd for Aid,
And fill'd with loud Laments the secret Shade.

(260-261)

The woman is now doomed to repeat the scene of her tragic end eternally, in atonement of her cruelty in life. Even though Boccaccio's conclusion is happy, as Nastagio/Theodore will use the frightening episode to convince the woman he loves to be less cruel and accept his courtship, I would argue that this tale has a striking resemblance with Raymond and the *Bleeding Nun* episode. Lewis asserted in his prologue that he had borrowed the story from some unidentified Germanic legend. I would claim that he is consciously misleading readers and provides one source in order to hide the others. Lewis wants readers to accept his incomplete truth. He apparently unveils his plagiarisms at the opening of his novel by declaring what his sources are. However, they are much more numerous than what he pretends. Using and paraphrasing Napier's metaphor of

false unveiling and real veiling, we can apply it to Lewis's narrative influences that he keeps hidden while pretending to reveal them. Strangely enough, critical analyses have tended to ignore the prolonged contact Lewis had with Classic, Medieval and Renaissance literature, which he acquired steadily during his studies.

Diego Saglia ("From Gothic Italy") claims that "the diffusion of Italian materials in late Gothic or Gothic-inflected narratives" can be amply verified, by analysing the literary and poetic production at the turn of the century and later on. He further explains that authors "turned to Dante and Boccaccio for their powerful Gothic-style combinations of pathetic plots of hopeless love and disturbing tales of persecution and agony. Through their stereotypical situations and characters these poems provided finely tuned descriptions of somatic and psychic states, especially the deformation of sensory perception, as well as sensitive and sympathetic portrayals of profoundly distressed human beings" (86). Saglia clarifies that Count Ugolino's atrocious sequence in Dante's *Inferno* had a strong visual and emotional impact, which is confirmed by the plethora of imitations it inspired. Romantic poets such as Byron and Shelley "were deeply fascinated by Dante". In particular, they were puzzled by Ugolino's story. Agnes's subplot in *The Monk* is quite interesting because it presents an important analogy with Dante's story. The cruel Abbess imprisoned Raymond's lover, Isabella, in a dark cell with her new born infant. She is left to starve with her child in the same way as Ugolino, who is walled up and forced to see his children die. Even if she is saved at the end and the Abbess and Ambrosio are punished, she is no longer the person she was before, transfigured by the deadly experience.

I would argue that Lewis imitated images taken from Dante, and like Beckford, used them especially in the conclusive part of the novel. The hideous creature that embodies the devil in the final pages is a mixture of horrid infernal monsters that can be found in Dante's *Inferno*. Whereas *Vathek's* Hell is based on dark images in contrast with the previous colourful narrations, the last chapter in *The Monk* is created with a *crescendo* of horrible visions:

The Sun now rose above the horizon¹³⁸; its scorching beams darted full upon the head of the expiring Sinner. Myriads of insects were called forth by the warmth; they drank the blood which trickled from Ambrosio's wounds; He had no power to drive them from him, and they fastened upon his sores, darted their stings into his body, covered him with their multitudes, and inflicted on him tortures the most exquisite and insupportable (442).

Some critics see the final scene as a reversal of *The Genesis* considering that his agony lasts seven days, but a more striking resemblance with this description can be retrieved in Dante's *Divine Comedy*:

Beyond all doubt that this was the dreary guild
Repellent both to God and His enemies-
Hapless ones never alive, their bare skin galled
By wasps and flies, blood trickling down the face,
Mingling with tears for harvest underfoot
By writhing maggots. (*Inferno*, III, 53-57)

Dante is crossing the abandoned space before Limbo and Inferno when he sees the souls of the Uncommitted - cowards that did not take a path in life. They are

forever stung by horrible insects for the law of *contrappasso*, a symbolic poetic justice according to which different punishments are distributed to various forms of sins. The pain provoked by the insects is an allegory of the sting of conscience these people did not follow in life.

The final horrid punishment for the monk seems to declare his lack of moral strength in life. Ambrosio's excruciating pain and his forced silence are in contrast with the beautiful sound of his voice and the sweet rhetoric of his words, pronounced during his sermon that had inaugurated the novel.¹³⁹ The influence from the great medieval poet, which is evident in Lewis, is highlighted by Diego Saglia, who convincingly argues that "the eighteenth century has been recognized as the beginning of a systematic re-evaluation of Dante [...]. Gothic overtones were found in the most popular narratives in the *Inferno*" (75). Saglia claims that Italian literature of the *Trecento* provided original imagery that could be found in the masterpieces of the period, which were the object of "assiduous and analytical studies" in Britain between the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. An interesting argument, which modifies the perspective of the traditional *clichés* about Italy, negatively judged and obscurely represented in the Gothic, is that disparaging images of the country were paradoxically provided by its own literary sources (74).

Lewis's remarkable syncretism, his classical studies and the fact that in 1792 he was already speaking of the *romance* he was writing, in the manner of *The Castle of Otranto* (mentioned in Baron Wilson, Peck, Lévy, Ellis, Macdonald *Monk Lewis, Groom*) form elements that support the theory of a wider number of sources for *The Monk*, where Classic and Medieval examples play a major role.

2.12. *The Monk and its Iconography*

Although he does not agree with the hypothesis, Lévy explains that Lewis's earlier critics and biographers, such as Summers, Varma, and Peck justified his dark imagery as a consequence of the fearful impressions he had received when he was a child while reading his mother's book *Saducismus Triumphatus* by Glanvil. They claimed that the representation of the devil in the book may have marked his fervid imagination. On the contrary, Lévy claims that Lewis's imagination was spurred by many sources (324). I would argue that Lévy's hypothesis is more convincing than the previous one. Baron Wilson describes Lewis's visits to a frightening castle owned by one of his powerful relatives¹⁴⁰ on his mother's side when he was a child: she posits that they must have left a lasting impression on young Matthew's imagination (I. 28), a fact that can be traced in his two sisters' correspondence. This represents an interesting anecdote but it is not enough to determine sources of imagery in *The Monk's*. She also claims that he had a special predilection "for the picturesque" that he was able to look for and recognize (II: 113).

Unlike the novels that had preceded it, the iconography of *The Monk* concentrated more on characters than on landscapes. Lewis's descriptions of nature are limited to the essential but the sporadic sections where nature is present are particularly important. Even though Lewis had not been to Italy yet, he probably had a satisfactory knowledge of Italian literature and art. Italian painters, who created images of beauty representing either people, places or

nature in the seventeenth and the eighteenth century, such as Artemisia Gentileschi, Rosa and Canaletto, were greatly appreciated in Britain. Some of them also lived there for a period of time. The highly acclaimed Claude and Poussin had spent most of their life in Italy, an aspect which was reflected in their works. Piranesi, the renowned creator of original etchings, was highly esteemed and famous in Britain where he was appointed honorary member of *The Royal Society of Antiquaries*. Equally, British painters, such as R. Wilson, Reynolds and Cozens, moved to Italy to learn different techniques. They often painted Italian monuments and landscapes that could later be admired in other countries.¹⁴¹ Then there was a huge market dedicated to the reproduction of famous paintings by known painters. Robert Sayer (1725-1794) was a publisher and made maps and prints. He also made large copies of engravings of famous painters of the day - in particular, he reproduced paintings by a German expat who had established his residence in England after a long stay in Rome. He became his friend and associate: he was Johan Zoffany (1733-1810), a painter who, in spite of being a popular artist and one of the most famous portraitists among Royal families during the second half of the eighteenth century, has been frequently overlooked until recently.¹⁴² His *Tribuna of The Uffizi*, now in The Windsor Royal Collection, was completed in 1778. It shows in a single painting major masterpieces of the recently inaugurated Florentine Museum. The so-called "gallery paintings", which were introduced by Baroque Dutch artists in the seventeenth century, had turned into forms of encyclopaedic representations *à la mode* in the eighteenth century. Art and gallery paintings showed the opulence and luxury of museums, merchants and art collectors but they also had

a didactic and informative role because they showed paintings in other countries that could not be admired directly.

I would assert that Lewis had a good knowledge of art: he may have discovered paintings thanks to his various journeys or by observing engravings and prints, which were fashionable in the period. His interest in music seemed more evident than his interest in art that is less manifest than in Walpole, Beckford and Radcliffe. However, there are in particular three images in the novel that capture the attention for their strong iconographic effect. The most vivid one is the image of the solitary mountains, which are the setting for the protagonist's final tragic moments. The contrast between the wretched monk and the arid surrounding landscape may be found in a work by Domenico Veneziano, made c.1445/1450, where Saint John's body represents a contrast with the whitish mountains in his solitary wandering through the desert. The figure of the saint is unusual, as explained in the Washington National Gallery of Art presentation of the image that "is classical in appearance (...), but it is a fusion of pagan and Christian ideas". The naked body of the young man represents the classical canon while the sharp peaks still remind us of a Gothic context. The description provided by Lewis has a strong resemblance with the painting:

The disorder of his imagination was increased by the wildness of the surrounding scenery; by the gloomy Caverns and steep rocks, raising above each other, and dividing the passing clouds; solitary clusters of Trees scattered here and there.

(439)

The image anticipates the saint's future suffering. I would posit that this represents a further analogy with the final context in the Monk, even though Ambrosio's path will take him to hell. The images of mountains surrounding desert zones were common in the Renaissance and later, an iconographic inheritance from Pliny¹⁴³ and his *Natural History*, in Latin *Naturalis Historia*, written between 77 and 79 AD (Sarah Blake McHam).

The second image is the sensuous Madonna painting which provokes Ambrosio's strange emotional state. When Matilda threatens to stab herself she uncovers her bosom:

The weapon's point rested upon her left breast: And Oh! That was such a breast! The Moon-beams darting full upon it, enabled the monk to observe its dazzling whiteness. His eyes dwelt with insatiable avidity upon the beautiful Orb. A sensation till then unknown filled his heart with a mixture of anxiety and delight. (65)

MacAndrew posited that Lewis had a Rafael painting in mind, called *Madonna del Cardellino*. I would claim there is no possible resemblance between the Renaissance artist and Lewis's description. Ambrosio mentions the Madonna's beautiful "snowy bosom" (41). However, Rafael's image does not portray this important detail. The breast was not generally shown except in paintings dedicated to the *Virgo Lactans*, known in English as the nursing Madonna, whose iconography apparently started with St. Bernard's miracle, who received nourishment as well as sacred knowledge from an image of the Virgin. Although few mediaeval representations remain, Renaissance and Baroque¹⁴⁴ painters produced various examples of breastfeeding scenes. They united charitable

providence with the glorification of the female body. One painting dated c.1500, *Madonna Litta*, attributed to Leonardo da Vinci, features a beautiful Madonna with child showing her right breast. A Flemish version of the scene was provided by Jan Gossart in a painting (*Madonna and Child*) dated 1527. The gaze is directed outside the painting while she is showing her right naked breast but not in the act of breastfeeding. Her golden ringlets falling down her shoulder recall both Matilda's and Antonia's hair. The French Jean Fouquet portrayed a particularly self-assured Madonna in 1452. What is surprising is the ivory colour of her skin, which recalls the colour "white" in Lewis's descriptions of the beautiful protagonists. Fouquet's Madonna is not breastfeeding but simply looking at her child and showing her left breast. The analogies between the paintings and Ambrosio's *ékphrasis* may not be in particular contradiction. I would suggest that he directly observed images of breastfeeding and naked bosoms either in art galleries or as etchings and engravings.

There is a third episode with strong visual power, and it is amongst the most abhorred by moralist critics, who saw an excess of sensuous exaltation in it. Thanks to Matilda's mysterious present, a magic mirror, which has similar attributes to Ariosto's bewitched ring, Ambrosio can secretly spy on Antonia. Antonia had been described as a Medicean Venus¹⁴⁵ in her first appearance at the beginning of the story (*The Monk* 9). In the next lines she is compared to the statue once more.¹⁴⁶ In this particular context, the monk can observe her taking a bath and joyfully playing with a little bird:

She was now undressing to bathe herself. The long tresses of
her hair were already bound up. The amorous Monk had full

opportunity to observe the voluptuous contours and admirable symmetry of her person. She threw off her last garment, and advancing to the Bath prepared for her, she put her foot into the water. It struck cold, and she drew it back again. Though unconscious of being observed, an in-bred sense of modesty induced her to veil her charms; and she stood hesitating upon the brink, in the attitude of the Venus de Medicis. At this moment a tame Linnet flew towards her, nestled its head between her breasts, and nibbled them in wanton play. The smiling Antonia strove in vain to shake off the Bird, and at length raised her hands to drive it from its delightful harbour.

(271)

The *Medicean Venus*, who seems to seduce Lewis's imagination with a particular insistence, as her image is more than once compared to Antonia's physicality, could be admired at the *Royal Academy* in London. The collection, established in 1761, was enriched with an unknown artist's statue of the Venus. The art-piece was donated by the Duke of Gloucester in 1779, therefore Lewis may have had several opportunities to admire the statue and not only observe it in gallery paintings of the Uffizi. However scandalous it may be, Antonia's bathing image reproduces an iconographic Rococo stereotype, where the playful nudity of gods or humans is portrayed in a bucolic and serene atmosphere. Fashionable French court painter François Boucher (1703-1770) was the master of these delicately licentious scenes. His paintings, frescoes and decorations were an example of the recently developed '*petit goût*' (Rossi Pinelli 6), dominant in France and then in Europe during the eighteenth century, in contrast with the traditional majestic

historical (and/or religious) taste. The similarity between Boucher's bucolic scene, describing *La Toilette de Venus* (1751), now at the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art, and Antonia's unconsciously erotic bath is remarkable. Young Lewis might have admired Boucher, Watteau and other popular Rococo painters while in Paris.¹⁴⁷ In parallel with literary sources, we may equally claim that Lewis absorbed iconographic influences, which he interiorized and then inserted into his novel.

2.13. Some Conclusive Hypotheses

Lewis's novel is essentially contradictory and although the writer aimed at *grandeur*, he was unable to obtain unanimous recognition. The textual ambiguities leave questions unanswered. In Groom's words, who partially contradicts Kilgour's definition of the story, *The Monk* is a failed *Buildungsroman* (xxxvi) where the progressive experience does not improve the characters. It may be argued that the story's plots share a common tragic theme of failure. It could be interpreted as a representation of the inadequate power of men, who are the victims of fate. Ambrosio, Lorenzo and Raymond are members of the clergy and the aristocracy respectively, but their actions are either futile or excessive. Raymond and Lorenzo cannot save the women they love and Ambrosio destroys the one he desires.

The Monk is a novel that creates misleading expectations of a romantic comedy which turn into a nightmare, in particular in the claustrophobic and dramatic description of the family tragedy. The text introduces different and opposing lines of narration. Picaresque situations intermingle with sentimental moments. One example is Raymond's adventure in the cottage in the middle of

the Black Forest, which develops into a sort of crime story made of fear and suspense, where the protagonist has to take violent action against dangers in an unexpected way. A parallel narrative line misleads the reader towards a romantic development during the first moments of Ambrosio's *tête à tête* with Antonia. The monk intends to give her the rudiments of philosophy and at the same time to start a deep emotional relationship with her. The context is reminiscent of the philosopher and theologian Abelard and his passionate but tragic love, whose dramatic story was described in Pope's *Eloisa to Abelard*. It is also connected to Rousseau's epistolary novel *La Nouvelle Héloïse* (1776) where the passionate but unfortunate Saint-Preux is surrounded by Julie's love and Claire's friendship. However, the Ambrosio-Antonia plots shifts towards the libertine style and ends in a Sadean atrocity. We could argue that Lewis was able to take to the extreme Burke's dictum.¹⁴⁸ It may be true that Lewis shows a tendency to punish his characters, especially women, in a cruel way - an aspect which has been interpreted by various critics as a latent deep misogyny. I would argue that the motivation may be found in the classical matrix of Greek and Latin works, identified in the various plots and subplots.

The novel denotes and confirms the presence of multifarious influences that can be traced in several parts of the story, which is partly a jigsaw puzzle that the reader must solve and partly an incongruous construction of "apparently nonsensical dead ends" (Groom xxxvii). I would rather justify *The Monk's* apparent incongruousness. Lewis's imitation of classical tragedies and medieval texts show that the writer, like Radcliffe, wanted to give his characters a higher literary status. The novel is complex and contains many different voices of past

and contemporary authors. Its eclectic style generates contradictory elements where opposing aspects co-exist.

Lewis's manuscript contains many corrections by a different hand and it was not signed (Groom xxv) - a fact that may imply his mother's collaboration. There is one curious letter where Lewis has a strange reaction to the possibility that his mother may publish her writings. He did not want her to publish anything, and he was particularly worried about this, even frantic. He was obsessed with the idea of a family scandal, but what can be clearly understood from the letter is his fear that public opinion may have thought his mother was the writer of *The Monk*.¹⁴⁹ My claim here is that the hypothesis of heavy intervention by his mother on the text cannot be excluded, as the novel contains adult perspectives that could not realistically come from an eighteen-year-old. Moreover, the constant need for money may have pushed Lewis and his mother to work out a solution to obtain financial advantages from publishing. H. Anderson, the creator of "the most authoritative scholarly edition of the work", admits that some of the changes between the manuscript and the first edition are 'rare and problematic' (Rudolph Glitz 24).¹⁵⁰ In his note on the text which is reproduced in every Oxford edition of *The Monk*, Anderson also considers the possibility of changes made by a compositor (*The Monk* xxxii). Doubts have not been cleared and some mystery about the changes in *The Monk* manuscript may persist. Lewis's ambiguous novel is not only a Gothic story but also a rich cultural catalogue, summarizing various and different forms of literature, and is worth analysing for the wide range of hypotheses it may offer. However, the classical mould in Lewis is a constant presence in his early literary experiment such as *The*

Effusions of Sensibility (Baron Wilson II: 242), as well as in his more mature works. One of the most interesting ones is his poetic composition dedicated to *Danaë*, written in imitation of the Greek poet Simonides (c.556-468 BC). The beautiful Danaë, once seduced by the mighty Jove in the form of golden rain, must face the dangers of the night alone at sea with her infant child (302). Lewis's love for classical authors is evidently much more deep-rooted than previously argued.

¹ In a letter from Oxford to his mother Frances Maria Sewell, dated 25 March 1792, just after he had come back from France, Lewis explained that he had started a story similar to *The Castle of Otranto*. (325). The letter can be read in Baron Wilson (I: 120).

² A few years after his death, the critic Baron Wilson, one of Lewis's mother's friends, published an apologetic biography with an extensive collection of Lewis's documents and correspondence, including works that were not published during his lifetime. The two volumes contain Baron Wilson's commentaries and explanations where she tends less to appreciate *The Monk* than make the reader aware of the writer's inexperience. She stresses that Lewis was an affectionate child and a man of moral principles.

³ Lewis explains that the work consists of a volume of about 420 pages (Lévy 327).

⁴ In her presentation to *The Monk*, McEvoy mentions Scott's opinion of the existence of copies published in 1795. Then she mentions that two copies bearing the date of 1795 have been found but does not specify further (McEvoy xxvii), whereas Groom, using Howard Anderson's research, clearly mentions that these two copies, found in the 1960s, are marked 1795, therefore the hypothesis of an earlier edition is acceptable (xi). M. Oliphant claims the novel was published in 1795. Peck, Lévy, Napier, Macdonald, J. Watt, Ellis, Kilgour and most critics generally refer to 1796 as the year of the first edition.

⁵ He attended Marylebone Seminary and Westminster School (McEvoy xxxvii).

⁶ In the Postscript to *Aldemorn the Outlaw* (1801), Lewis himself admitted writing a lot between 14 and 21 years, when he should have been reading more: "A period which I passed scribbling Novels and Plays, but which I am aware would have been much better employed in reading sense than in writing nonsense" (Lévy 331). This in part an apologetic stance and partly an ironic tendency, both present in Lewis ever since the accusations of indecency that had been hovering over *The Monk*.

⁷ He had been sent abroad to improve his knowledge of foreign languages in view of his diplomatic career. Meanwhile, he continued his political training, even though he was often writing to his mother about his desire to be a full-time writer - a wish that she apparently encouraged (Punter and Byron 141). However, his letters frequently show a pecuniary interest connected with the idea of publishing, which was also due to the anxiety of supporting his mother financially.

⁸ It may not correspond to *The Monk*.

⁹ In a letter to Scott (Peck 118), Lewis explained that “A ghost or a witch is a *sine qua non* ingredient in all the dishes of which I mean to compose my hobgoblin repast”.

¹⁰ Even though the high doses of sexual desire in *The Monk* may seem a novelty, it is true that stories with erotic potential had preceded Lewis’s novel, with tragic achievements in Richardson, or humorously gross results in Fielding. Toni Bowers analyses the different forms of sexual transgressions in what she defines as “Tory novels of seduction” which include Richardson’s *Clarissa*. She claims that this narrative typology “had remained always keenly aware of the complicity of the oppressed, and deliberately complicated the categories of victim and victimizer” (157). Evidently, a solution in defence of these narrating choices was to cast the responsibility onto victims, who were considered as sinful as the perpetrator.

¹¹ The series of contradictions are generally justified by the author’s young age, according to an anonymous critic, identified as M. Wollstonecraft. Her review of *The Monk* was published in the *Analytical Review*, vol. XXIV, October 1796, p.403. She claims that “He would deserve to be damned who could resist even devilish spells, conducted with such address; and assuming such heavenly forms”.

¹² This *naïveté* may seem inexplicable. Boasting his title was a form of superficiality due to his young age. However, considering his nervous reaction to Byron’s irony on his poetical qualities, or his obsessive desire to be in the company of aristocratic people, we may suppose that the young man was anxious for social recognition.

¹³ Coleridge admired the stories of the Erring Jew and the Bleeding Nun, because they were example of a great imaginative quality, elegantly expressed: “We trust, however, that satiety will banish what good sense should have prevented; and that, wearied with fiends, incomprehensible characters, with shrieks, murders, and subterraneous dungeons, the public will learn, by the multitude of the manufacturers, with how little expense of thought or imagination this species of composition is manufactured. But, cheaply as we estimate *romances* in general, we acknowledge, in the work before us, the offspring of no common genius” (Coleridge 195).

¹⁴ Coleridge was only three years older than Lewis but his pompous prose, together with the vehemence of his judgment, definitely make him seem quite older. His conclusions on the novel are peremptory: “a mormo for children, a poison for youth, and a provocative for the debauchee” (199).

¹⁵ The poet and critic totally disapproved of the explicit scenes describing evident eroticism, the physically crude matricide and the graphic violence of rape based on incestuous desire. However, the most offensive parts were the ones connected to blasphemy, even more so than those concerning sex. The mention of Elvira’s censorship of certain passages in *The Bible* in order to prevent Antonia from reading them deeply offended a public who based their moral values on the Holy Scriptures. Here follows the problematic passage:

After leaving Elvira, still weak because of a long illness, Ambrosio, impatient to seduce her, goes into Antonia’s room furtively, then he examines what she is reading. He does not recognize the text immediately because, as we discover later, is handwritten and censored by Elvira herself, to prevent her child from acquiring too much experience directly from the text: “He examined the Book which She had been reading, and had now placed upon the Table. It was the Bible. ‘How!’ said the Friar to himself; ‘Antonia reads the Bible and is still so ignorant?’

But, upon a further inspection, He found that Elvira had made exactly the same remark. That prudent Mother, while She admired the beauties of the sacred writings, was convinced, that unrestricted no reading more improper could be permitted a young Woman. Many of the narratives can only tend to excite ideas the worst calculated for a female breast: Everything is called plainly and roundly by its name; and the annals of a Brothel would scarcely furnish a greater choice of indecent expressions. Yet this is the Book, which young Women are recommended to study; which is put into the hands of Children, able to comprehend little more than those passages of which they had better remain ignorant; and which but too frequently

inculcates the first rudiments of vice, and gives the first alarm to the still sleeping passions. (*The Monk* 259).

¹⁶ Problems did not arise with sex or religion only. The publisher Thomas Williams had had to face legal proceedings in 1792 for publishing Thomas Paine's (1737-1808) political work *The Age of Reason*. On the other hand, Lewis's publisher, Joseph Bell, became extremely rich by secretly selling the remaining third edition copies for twice their price before publishing the expurgated version (Groom, xxxiv-xxxv).

¹⁷ It is not clear whether the identification with the negative hero was voluntary or accidental. Baron Wilson identifies the problem in the fact that Lewis usually signed all his correspondence as M. G. Lewis, leading people to think that M. stood for Monk and not for Matthew, as very few people knew his real name (I: 185). The choice to mention the censored passages in the Bible may rather be more meta-literary than blasphemous. It looks as if he is echoing the future effects that his book might have on careful parents. They would censure the novel's dangerous passages for their children. This is considered as an intrinsic proleptic characteristic of the story, through which Lewis is anticipating the reactions to his novel and the consequent scandal. He provides an extra-textual example of a perfect valid writing (the Biblical text) which might be misunderstood by dangerous moralism, an aspect underlined by Fitzgerald ("Crime, Punishment, Criticism").

¹⁸ That the shocking images in his novel had created the sediment of an unfavourable opinion and that his literary *persona* was never fully accepted is confirmed by the negative obituary that was written in *The Tickler* I/ 1 in December 1818 (pp.2-3), a few months after his death that had taken place on the ship from the West Indies to London.

¹⁹ R. Hume finds similarities between Lewis and Beckford: "*The Monk* (1796), like *Vathek* (1786) (...), gains much of its effect from murder, torture and rape" (285). However, it should be clarified that rape is not included in the latter.

²⁰ "The energies that drive Ambrosio seem to exceed even his own ambitions and appetite; they can as little be contained by his actions as within his imagination, and dash him to the logic of literalization and externalization" (ibid.). One clear example can be found in Ambrosio and Antonia's dialogue, when he takes the expressions of her feelings of love for him literally whereas she only means affection and gratitude for helping her mother.

²¹ S. Chaplin considers Lewis to be the initiator of terror with his explicit descriptions of "death and degradation and replete with abject material detail" (44). There is, however, no general agreement on the fact that Ambrosio is the first negative hero. Macdonald ("A Dreadful, Dreadful Dream") does not only demonstrate the intertextual nature of *The Monk* in connection with *Clarissa* (1748) but also claims that Ambrosio is the embodiment of the cruel Lovelace, who continued torturing the woman he loved, kept her prisoner, and raped her. He repeated his cruel actions until her death made him suddenly understand that Clarissa was his life - an epiphany which is however not part of Ambrosio's story. Smollett's *Adventures of Ferdinand Count Fathom's* protagonist (1753) was "a complete picture of human depravity" (Scott *Biographical Notices* III: 26). Another negative character is Choderlos de Laclos's libertine Vicomte de Valmont in *Les Liaisons Dangereuses* (translated as *The Dangerous Liaisons*), published in 1782. The Vicomte destroys the pure M^{me} de Tourvel's life. Like Lovelace, he undergoes repentance when the woman he has ill-treated dies of chagrin. De Sade's characters are horribly cruel (unbearably worse than Ambrosio) but are figurines in a grand tableau, not real characters: In *Justine, or the Misfortunes of Virtue*, (1791) the protagonist is Justine, who is the victim of every possible aberration. Perpetrators anonymously alternate in a growing horror with no focus on a single villain. No cruel character has the least sign of repentance; on the contrary, their violence is an unstoppable *crescendo*. Ambrosio's only preoccupation is with the preservation of moral appearance, which does not allow him to fully acknowledge his crimes.

²² It is difficult to accept this statement indiscriminately. Beckford and Lewis come from very similar situations. Nevertheless their creations may be considered antithetical.

²³ Emily is protected by her parents in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* whereas Ambrosio is sheltered by the monastery. Antonia receives parental safeguard while in Murcia. Antonia and Ambrosio do not initially have contact with the outside world but in a limited and safe way. Lewis's protagonists are going to modify these contexts completely, both willingly and unwillingly. Whereas Adeline in the *Romance of the Forest* is strong enough to face the sudden twists of fortune, once she is abandoned by her 'supposed' family and is catapulted into real life, Antonia and Ambrosio succumb to danger and/or temptation. Emily and also Adeline and Julia are reactive heroines, and their strength make them resemble the Ariosto's female warrior Bradamante.

²⁴ Sterne had ridiculed Catholicism in *Tristram Shandy*. In the story, the Catholic faith is generally identified with the French. The different characters criticize the Catholic Church, its "murder, rapine [and] bloodshed". This novel is a further example of a text which "is about national self-fashioning against the Continent and Catholic other". The Gothic novel may be included in this agenda (Walmsley 39-50).

²⁵ "As heterotopias, the labyrinth becomes doubly other: literally constituted of detours, repetitions, and duplications which traverse the same space with an interminable criss-crossing of differences and divergences, a space that is other to, constitutive of and resistant to, the known limits of society and subjectivity" (Botting 262).

²⁶ Ferguson Ellis posits that the castle stands for patriarchal symbolism and domestic violence. She also claims that only a character such as Pamela "can bring purity to the fallen aristocratic castle and make it a home worthy of the name" (8). However, even if the dungeon is part of the structure, it is not the actual building. Dungeons are the most hidden and secretive parts, where darkness reigns and crimes are committed. We might say that the *topos* of the castle is not relevant in none of the texts we have analysed here, a fact which highlights the problematic value of generalizations about the Gothic.

²⁷ The "mixture of religious adoration and expressions of sexual ecstasy suggests the connections between Ambrosio's religious strictness and his eventual sexual incontinence" (Napier 127).

²⁸ Broadwell was the first to analyse the *topos* of the veil in Radcliffe. Her conclusions were different from Kosofsky and Napier. Felicity Nussbaum identified connotations of exotic atmospheres, connected with the idea of 'the other woman' or 'the harlot' (123) in opposition to domestic repressed sexuality in women, a dichotomy which became more evident in the eighteenth century. Molesworth considers the veil as a symbol of the hymen (407).

²⁹ "Science (like art, like politics) is always in danger of enforcing and promoting pre-existing biases whilst veiling such biases in disinterestedness, neutrality and nature. [...] eighteenth-century attitudes about sexed bodies are particularly and purposefully exaggerated in *The Monk*: when Ambrosio drugs and rapes the young Antonia, he blames her – and more to the point, her appearance – for her own shameful 'dishonour'. Ambrosio's charge is a vivid articulation of his society's gendered attitudes" (87).

³⁰ Physiognomy, phrenology and new sciences on the relationship between human behaviour and physical aspects brought about philosophical doubts. Were good and evil reflected in the forms of beauty and ugliness respectively? An allusion to contemporary revolutionary sciences can be found in *The Monk*, which introduces a dialectic comparison between the images of Matilda and Antonia, both representatives of an ethereal and superior beauty to which corresponds an angelic, but almost dumb character in the latter, and a devastating devilish nature in the former.

³¹ The analogy between Ambrosio and Eve is remarkable in the scene of the serpent in the cloister garden.

³² Williams (*Art of Darkness*) puts the stress on Ambrosio's excessive sensibility that renders him hysterical, uncontrollable and a victim of desire whereas Brewer analyses the progressive increase of psychological male characteristics in Matilda. She becomes the prototype of a liberated woman.

³³ The article on prolepsis by Fitzgerald makes an interesting analysis of foreknowledge in *The Monk* in parallel with the critical history of the work. Anticipation concerns the characters inside the novel, but also the destiny of the book itself. She claims that Lewis included a series of anticipations of events in the plot, which conveyed coincidental insights of negative critical reception on his novel. Lorenzo's nightmare in the Capuchins Church foreshadowing Antonia's horrible destiny in the first chapter is a clear example of prolepsis.

³⁴ Macdonald reveals that in the letter of apology to her husband for having eloped with another man and being pregnant, Mrs. Lewis confessed that she was living in constant fear of being buried alive (*Monk Lewis* 7). Groom explains that Lewis's mother suffered from this idiosyncrasy. This obsession may have influenced the description of Agnes's ghastly destiny, who is buried alive in *The Monk* (xii).

³⁵ Analyses of the romantic but ambiguous *banditti*, with whom the public had become acquainted thanks to Rosa's dark painting, have been carried out by a number of critics, among whom Clery and John Whatley. The dichotomy of the *banditti* is constant in their representation: they could be either "rogues" or members of "a new movement" to revise "an unjust culture". In a period of tormented political and social changes, characterized by the birth of mysterious cults dedicated to science, discovery and the 'immortalist thinking', *banditti* could be the embodiment of all unfathomable mysteries (Whatley 4-6). Radcliffe and Lewis provide evidence of their extremely different characterizations.

³⁶ With the following difference to be kept in mind: Vathek is in a land of fantasy blended with real Oriental places, whereas Adeline travels through real places, however clearly modified by Radcliffe's imagination.

³⁷ In her essay "The Gothic Mirror", Kahane posits the idea that basic threats for Gothic heroines are not caused by male characters. In particular, she disagrees with Varma's opinion that Gothic horror resides in the fear of incest, with Railo's Gothic paradigm of the father/brother's erotic power and Leslie Fiedler's definition of the Gothic castle as the symbol of paternal authority. Kahane claims that the mother, even the dead one, is the cause of tension in the young female protagonists, who struggle for a separate identity and to escape (many times unsuccessfully) from the maternal imago, which dangerously survives after the parent's death - frequently in a supernatural way.

³⁸ The perils identified by Bienstock Anolik concerning the mother are death, imprisonment, and abjection (in Julia Kristeva's definition: it is the lack of status as either subject or object). Armstrong considers the mother's role as "panopticon", which is the entity of strict surveillance in Foucauldian terms. Carolyn Dever argues that the mother figure means safety, unity and order, and it is therefore the enemy of the "narratable". Bienstock Anolik (26-27) considers the non-presence of the mother as a form of proto-independence in the daughter who has a margin of relative freedom and can contrast the oppressive patriarchal power.

³⁹ The most explicit and shortest documentation about the father is provided in the first three lines of *Vathek* where we understand that he died prematurely. About Antonia's father we discover that he died when still young while he was staying in the West Indies. The *coup de scène*, which is the discovery that Ambrosio was his first born, is revealed at the very end of the story.

Adeline's father is presented at the very beginning as a cruel and despotic man. Here again the reader does not discover the truth until the story conclusion.

⁴⁰ It is his presence in her dreams that saves her. In spite of his absence he can intervene in the story and solve it.

⁴¹ Adeline's story is narrated in the first person. A more complex narrative strategy can be found in Sophia Lee's *The Recess* (1783) where the author interestingly experiments with a first person narration, but she does not employ the epistolary style.

⁴² "A sort of mystery enveloped this Youth [...] and no one had ever seen his face" (*The Monk* 41-42). The binomial duality of Rosario-Matilda lies in the character's lack of identity (introduced by "a Stranger [...] of distinguished rank" that had abandoned him/her at the monastery door), his/her undefined gender (first male then female) and his/her invisible presence (Ambrosio is apparently the only one interacting with him/her).

⁴³ One aspect that Lewis shares with Radcliffe is the use of epigraphs at the beginning of every single chapter.

⁴⁴ An analogous strategy had been used by Godwin in *Caleb Williams*.

⁴⁵ Gordon also identifies a further image in the Gothic narration. It is represented by the "the existential environment of the Gothic sensibility [which] is the fragment, incomplete or unfinished, mediating between nature and culture" (59). I would argue that despite the religious tension felt by the characters, other hypotheses seem suitable for Lewis. Moreover, the contextual development of archaeology in the years of the birth of the Gothic may be worth investigating.

⁴⁶ The Bleeding Nun and the Erring Jew are the most frightening episodes. These mysterious characters are not real people but embody supernatural entities. Their introduction is a technical device with "a functional role" (Brooks 254) to justify the supernatural element that enters Ambrosio's plot as well.

⁴⁷ It was created in 1434 by the Dutch Jan van Eyck, active between 1422 and 1441. The scene of the supposed ceremony is perfectly reflected in quite smaller dimensions within the convex mirror hanging behind the two protagonists of the painting, now in the National Gallery of London. The painting has been named in different ways: *The Portrait of Giovanni Arnolfini and his Wife*, *The Arnolfini Marriage* (Erika Langmuir 44), and most recently *The Arnolfini Portrait* in the National Gallery Official website. The painting has been given different names because of the difficulty of clearly interpreting its meaning.

⁴⁸ Radcliffe is known for her rational explanations of the supernatural, a characteristic which even becomes obsessive in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. However, *The Romance of the Forest* contains mysterious visions and telepathic dreams. The supernatural remains lingering until the end and beyond (see Section of Radcliffe).

⁴⁹ Lewis's visits to Europe did not reflect a traditional Grand Tour. Famous travellers such as Walpole and Gray in the 1730s, or Goethe at the end of the century, started a journey that would take them to various parts of the Continent for longer or shorter periods, keen on discovering ancient monuments, famous art masterpieces and original sceneries. Young Lewis did not actually go on a Grand Tour, but alternated between months in foreign countries to improve his education and knowledge of the local languages and periods at university in England.

⁵⁰ "I am happy to know you have been passing your time so pleasantly since I left England. As for me, the Hague and the Dutch are as insufferable as ever" (Baron Wilson I: 131). Lewis then continues his letter by describing "the best society of Paris" that he has met. He insists again on

boredom: "You will easily conceive that, after such a society, the Dutch assemblies must be dreadful. I, therefore, go seldom near them" (132). Before finishing the long letter, he reiterates his negative opinion of the country: "I was also presented to the Prince Adolphus. This little expedition made me only feel The Hague more stupid and insupportable than ever" (134). French historian Michel Vovelle underlined that groups of French aristocrats had found refuge in neighbouring countries supporting the monarchy, in order to avoid violent persecutions and organize a counter-revolution.

⁵¹ In his note to the text, H. Anderson explained that the manuscript on Dutch paper, which was acquired at an auction in 1849, came to light again in 1959. The MS, which can be now seen at Wisbech and Fenland Museum, in Wisbech, Cambridgeshire, was used for the first edition, but was unsigned. However, Lewis's handwriting was recognized. This could be clear evidence of his literary activity in Holland. Groom also specifies that the kind of paper used for the manuscript, called 'Pieter de Vries', was generally imported to England at the time so it may also be possible that it was written and/or completed in England (xxxii-xxxiii). Macdonald argues that it is impossible to determine who made the many corrections that are present in the MS (*Monk Lewis* 211).

⁵² Interestingly, Lewis does not mention the term 'novel'. Both Radcliffe and Lewis evidently rejected mundane forms of realism and remained attached to an old style in the tradition of Dante, Ariosto and the mythical legends of the Middle Ages. My hypothesis is that they aristocratically tried to give a new form of dignity to *romances* but were frustrated in their intent by the hordes of imitators, busy at creating inflationary numbers of poor quality *romances* which devalued also their personal efforts and transformed the newly revived *genre* in a low popular production. That *romance* was felt as an important form of creation, as is demonstrated in the essay by Nathan Drake (1766-1836) on "Gothic Superstition", published in 1798 and later included in the collection entitled *Literary Hours* which came out two years later. In the 1950s, Arthur Cooke indicated that *romance* was positively considered by the essayist who would encourage a wider use of it. "Drake pointed out that the eighteenth century *romance* writers had made use of one branch of the Gothic supernatural, employing only those effects which were productive of horror and terror. There was, he added, an entirely different branch of medieval superstition, which had so far been disregarded by contemporary writers" (24). This form had been used by Chaucer, Spenser, Ariosto and Shakespeare and included creatures such as 'elves and 'fairies' that Cooke defines as "sportive" and that today we may call "fantasy". On the contrary, Botting uses Beattie's essay "On Fable and Romance"(1783) to draw a distinction between novel and romance and explains that "the essay [by Beattie] argues that Cervantes' *Don Quixote* signals the end of the old or medieval *romance* and the emergence of the modern *romance* or novel (...) Novels are divided into serious and comic forms. However, Beattie's essay concludes in a cautionary way (...), describing *romances* as a dangerous recreation" (*Gothic* 26).

⁵³ "There are many reasons which make Oxford an improper abode for you" (Baron Wilson I: 107). Lewis does not want to be seen with his mother. In spite of writing to her frequently, he rejects her proposals of meeting in public places on various occasions. The scandal of her elopement with the music teacher when he was only six years old could not be forgotten or forgiven. Lewis even rejects his parents' idea of reuniting by openly telling his mother that she had erred and that their separation should be permanent (125).

⁵⁴ J. Watt analyses the effects of both Goethe's extraordinary success and of the translations of German novels that literally invaded Britain in the 1790s. He claims that "Any treatment of the impact of German writing in this period must begin by acknowledging the extent of its popularity, at least after the first translation in 1779 of Goethe's *Sorrows of Young Werther* (written in 1774)" and that "The influx of German *romances* began in 1794 with the translation of Carl Kramer's *Herman of Unna*, succeeded most famously by translations of Schiller's unfinished work *The Ghost Seer* and Cajetan Tschink's *A Victim of Magical Delusions* in 1795, and two versions of Carl Grosse's *The Genius* in 1796" (71-72). *The Genius* was also translated as *Horrid Mysteries*, one of the horror stories included by Austen in *Northanger Abbey* (1818). Norton posits that the

translators of German works used Radcliffe's language prevalently, therefore the German influx was not as strong as J. Watt maintains. Moreover, it is interesting to notice that the fever for German works diminished in the next years when conspiracies theories were divulged by a series of pamphlets and articles. Abbé Augustin Barruel (1741-1820), a French publicist, accused the German Illuminati of being responsible for the beginning of the French Revolution and its atrocities. Other pamphlets blamed the Rosicrucian and other secret societies that had flourished in Germany before the 1789 for the extreme political unrest. After these publications Germany started being seen as the cradle of dangerous conspiracies, and no longer the picturesque setting of Faustian legends.

⁵⁵ Lévy posits that the growing number of ghost stories was partially due of the effects of German literature whereas Clery traces the deeper roots for the supernatural in the seventeenth century. The mysterious life of the alchemist Cagliostro, who had also lived in England before being condemned to life imprisonment by the Inquisition, inspired fictional creations based on his character. "À la source des histoires de spectres et de sorcières dont le nombre, chaque mois, allait croissant, il y avait à la fois les antiques légendes populaires dont Stolberg, Herder et Bürger n'avaient capté que la veine la plus poétique et la plus raffinée, le sombre héritage ancestral de sorcellerie et de magie noire, et aussi le *Geisterseher* de Schiller, qui venait d'attirer l'attention sur les scandaleux agissements des Cagliostro et autres 'visionnaires' de l'époque" (Lévy 312).

⁵⁶ Rix "identifies" the presence of Norse mythology in British literature at the turn of century and claims that Lewis was among the authors who were influenced by Northern myths and Danish epic legends, especially in his later production. In his "Advertisement" to *The Monk*, Lewis mentions that the poetic interlude "The *Water-King*, from the third to the twelfth stanza, is the fragment of an original Danish ballad" (*The Monk* 6). However, the clues which Lewis provides concerning his work are generally misleading and do not specify sources clearly.

⁵⁷ On 30 July 1792 he wrote to his mother from Weimar: "I am breaking my brain against German as hard as ever I can" (Baron Wilson I: 86). I would argue that his motivation for learning the language was more pecuniary than cultural. Translating and writing for money seem to be his permanent concern from what can be evinced in his correspondence starting from his stay in Paris. His need for money was dictated by his mother's apparently difficult economic situation (in spite of the allowance she received from her ex-husband). Young looking and brilliant, fond of literature and music, she had abandoned him and her three children, while Matthew was at Westminster School in 1782. (Baron Wilson I: 39-47).

⁵⁸ The spellings of both the poet's name and the protagonist's name are incorrect. The *umlaut*, or dieresis, in Goethe is not right; the "h" is missing from Werther, a fact which may let us suppose a superficial knowledge of the language (and of the translation as well). Moreover, the text had been translated in English in 1779 (Stanley Appelbaum). We could posit that the misspellings may be considered as a signal of Lewis's poor knowledge of German.

⁵⁹ Whereas the German influence was sudden and, like the poetic current of *Sturm und Drang*, had taken Britain and Europe by surprise, the impact of France was steadier and had had a longer tradition in Britain. Knowledge and appreciation of French was a general cultural feature. Translated editions from contemporary and past authors such as Rabelais, Montaigne, Perrault, Voltaire, Rousseau, Boileau and many others were published regularly (Hopkins and Gillespie 310-365).

⁶⁰ Lewis knew *Camille et le Souterrain* by Joseph Marsollier (1790) et *Les Victimes Cloîtrées* (1791) by Boutet de Monvel because he mentioned these works in his correspondence. Other works dealing with the life in convents and monasteries are Denis Diderot, *La Religieuse* (1780), which Lewis may have seen in the form of a manuscript as the text was published posthumously in 1796, and Fiévée, *Les Rigueurs du Cloître* (1790). I provide some titles of anonymous authors whose erotic stories are set in monasteries before or during the Revolution: *Intrigues Monastiques*, *Amour Encapuchonné*, *Les Tromperies des Prestres*. *Don Bougre*. Erotic texts on

adventures in convents had been growing in number since the end of the seventeenth century. One of the most popular was *Venus in the Cloister* by Jean Barrin (1683), which had been translated into English in 1724 (the publisher, Edmund Curl, was arrested and sent to prison). Conversely, the apparently frivolous beginning of *The Monk* may be taken from the typical theatrical *incipit* in light comedies by Alain-Réné Lesage (1668-1747) or Pierre Marivaux 1688-1763. The story by Jacques Cazotte (1719-1792), *Le Diable Amoureux* (1772) based on fantastic events, presents an amazingly similar context to Lewis's work. Following the line of libertine stories concerning religious people it is interesting to remember that the British monthly *Lady's Magazine*, which was usually read by Lewis's mother, published *The Monks and The Robbers* in instalments from August to November 1794. It is the story of a monk 'Ambrose' who seduces a young girl 'Annette'. The double standard of moral rigor and lethal hypocrisy was also present in British literature. The apparently irreproachable attitude of Ambrosio condemning Agnes at the beginning of the story is strictly linked to Shakespeare's Angelo's hidden hypocrisy in *Measure for Measure* as the epigraph of the first chapter clearly corroborates.

⁶¹ He illustrates "an episode in Casanova's memoirs, ostensibly true though drenched in fiction throughout (and written, of course, in French), as if staged for a larger audience. A high-born nun in Murano, known only by the initials 'M.M.', invites him to a secret *casino* where they browse in, and re-enact, the erotic texts and pictures that line the room – a definitive library of Enlightenment libertinism. In this private space, sex becomes not an expression of intimacy, but a self-conscious performance" (Turner 216). The truthfulness of the episode has not been demonstrated and there is still a lot of controversy about the story, which was even more complex, as the nun too had a lover, the Abbé Bernis, the French Ambassador in Venice. Apparently the ambassador had created a *casino* with two twin rooms divided by a wall decorated in Rococo style, hiding a series of holes which allowed each visitor to observe the other room undisturbed. He supposedly observed his lover making love with Casanova, or together with M.M., he observed Casanova's effusions with his young mistress. Casanova's narration increases the sense of suspense because the secret police is observing him while he is observed by the Ambassador, who is at his turn under surveillance by the French monarchy. The narration offers an interesting mixture of male and female gaze and the eye of the enemy. It is interesting to underline the visual observation of erotic images which influence the protagonists of the scene, a sort of illicit *ékphrasis*. Published in the mid-1780s, Casanova's writings were extremely popular at the time.

⁶² It might be strange to compare Richardson with Lewis. However, Richardson's case could be taken as a symbol of the new blurred frontiers between a supposed literary era, and the following one: "The sober realist Richardson might seem the opposite of the libertine fabulist Diderot, but he too tells his tale of a magic ring that provides an unwitting paradigm of the novel [*The Indiscreet Jewels*]" (Miriam Wallace). In a letter to Elisabeth Carter Richardson confessed that he had desired Angelica's magic ring, featured in Ariosto's *Orlando Furioso* and he daringly asked the lady if she would like to have a similar object herself (James Grantham Turner 214). *Les Bijoux Indiscrets* had been published by Denis Diderot in 1748, the same year of the publication of Richardson's *Clarissa*. Diderot's libertine novel featured a magic ring that induced women's *genitalia*, that is the supposed 'discreet jewels', to narrate the erotic adventures of their owners. The ring made the owner invisible as well so he could observe sex scenes undisturbed. In spite of its high level of eroticism, the text was an ironic political parody of the French king.

⁶³ The real Hermitage had been built in Russia in 1764 to host the art collections of the imperial family and it originally had the same function of the Louvre for the French royal family.

⁶⁴ One edition of the poem, influential during the second half of the century, was published with illustrations by William Blake (1757-1827) and engravings by Luigi Schiavonetti at the beginning of the nineteenth century, which is a demonstration of its lasting fame.

⁶⁵ He admitted in his correspondence that he was bored by the long descriptions of landscapes.

⁶⁶ In fact, he confessed he could recognize himself in the description of Montoni, a comparison he was however not so proud of. It is ironic that a young man such as Lewis had a typical young woman's reaction in reading *romances* - an impulse which was to be highly ridiculed both by literary critics and writers. However, it is necessary to consider that it was inevitable for an adolescent to be influenced by such a novelist who was the bestseller author of the last decade of the eighteenth century. Miles claims that Ann Radcliffe was a sort of Barbara Cartland of her times, with the difference that she was also appreciated by critics (*The Great Enchantress* 8).

⁶⁷ Themes from Radcliffe's novels, written before Lewis's story, are evident. The secluded Louisa Bernini, secretly imprisoned in the dungeons of Mazzini's castle is at the basis of Agnes's story of life imprisonment. Both characters are believed to be dead. The fatal passion of the libertine Maria de Vellormo for the young Hippolitus [sic] is reflected in the story of Raymond who receives the unwanted erotic attentions of the Baroness, Donna Rodolpha. The house in the middle of the forest, populated by criminals, becomes Lewis's cottage of *banditti* within The Black Forest. The Marquis of Montalt's obstinate passion for Adeline, his desire to have her and his consequent abduction of the girl is mirrored in Ambrosio's mad passion and his stratagems to imprison and violate the young and innocent Antonia in a secret place. Also, the ambiguous figures of abbots and abbesses delineated in both *The Sicilian Romance* and *The Romance of Forest*, examples of negative forms of Catholicism, are embodied in the religious figures in *The Monk*.

⁶⁸ The definition "Great Enchantress", used as a title in Miles's monograph, was provided by Scott.

⁶⁹ Fitzgerald uses the typically extreme Gothic criticism and Todd's conclusion as an example of the radicalism inspired by Lewis's work against his *persona*, as if he was actually performing in real life some of the abominable acts described in his literary creations ("Crime, Punishment, Criticism" 49).

⁷⁰ Being a voracious reader Lewis knew his contemporaries' works. Godwin was active in the same years as well. Lewis mentions *Caleb Williams* in his correspondence. Although he appreciated the author's inventiveness, he did not quite like Godwin for being "half a democrat" (Baron Wilson I: 149). Interestingly, Lewis's contemporary publications show the reading public's capacity to absorb very different models of writing. Burney's *Camilla* was published in the same year as *The Monk* proving to be a success for its sentimental aspects as well its realistic descriptions. *An Enquiry into the Duties of the Female Sex* by Thomas Gisborn (1758-1846), a text providing the rules to follow "for the division of the male and female spheres", was also published in 1796 (Ferguson Ellis 12). It was one of the many conduct books, which had been printed ever since the mid-seventeenth century to control women's behaviour in every aspect of life.

⁷¹ Groom's description of the guillotine and the tortures imposed on a French noblewoman, in his introduction to the 2016 edition of the novel, are far worse than Lewis's gothic narration in *The Monk*, and they confirm what critics such as Rintoul, Kilgour, Baldick and Mighall have highlighted about Gothic criticism: "On 3 September 1792, the Princesse de Lamballe, one of Queen Maria Antoinette's closest friends, was summarily tried before a revolutionary tribunal. She refused to swear an oath to liberty and equality, and declare her hatred for the king and queen, and was immediately given up to the Parisian mob. She was lynched and decapitated, and her head was paraded on a pike before the window of the queen, who duly fainted. There were also darker rumours that she had been stripped naked, raped repeatedly, both alive and dead, that her breasts had been bitten off to revive her, that she had been eviscerated and her guts wrenched out and used as belts, and that her genitals had been mutilated" (vii). In a similar way, Ellis starts his interesting comprehensive study on Gothic fiction by introducing a macabre anecdote of the French natural philosopher Barthélemy Faujas who visited the cabinet of a London surgeon, John Seldon, while travelling in England in 1799. The surgeon had embalmed the body of his young lover that he kept naked under a glass frame to show to his visitors (1). Evidently, Gothic fiction

has a mesmerizing power which creates extra-textual contamination of its dominant atmospheres.

⁷² The *pastiche* is a peculiar form of literature which can be adapted to Walpole's *romance*, to Beckford's visionary creation and to Lewis's strange novel. Molesworth (405) identifies *pastiche* in its post-modern definition by Fredric Jameson, who described it as an ironic form of mimicry.

⁷³ Once again the similarities which involve Lewis and Beckford can be applied to Walpole as well.

⁷⁴ Beckford had written his work in French and in 1791 had published *Popular Tales from the German*, which he had personally translated.

⁷⁵ Groom explains (xxxii) that Byron was even more explicit when he said that Lewis went to Jamaica because he wanted 'to suck sugar canes', the sugar stick being a slang expression for male genitalia. It is difficult to accept Baron Wilson's claim that Byron highly appreciated Lewis. In his poetical satire on Lewis written in 1809, Byron had defined him "Apollo's sexton", an epithet that made Lewis furious, according to M. Shelley's testimony. When he met Byron, he aggressively asked why Byron had used the simile. According to Macdonald (*Monk Lewis* 187), Lewis objected to the low-class rather than the funereal connotations of the metaphor: "Lo! Wreaths of yew, not laurel, bind thy brow / Thy Muse a Sprite, Apollo's sexton, thou!" (Lines 267-268). The name of the satirical composition is *English Bards and Scotch Reviewers*, composed with the intent of mocking Lewis and Scott's joint narrative effort, *Tales of Wonder* (1801).

⁷⁶ The three most popular male Gothic writers of the late eighteenth century seem to share a similar characterization that may be purely coincidental. Some critics consider their sexual orientation as an influential aspect in the apparent ambiguities, which are examined in psychoanalytical and Queer Gothic criticism.

⁷⁷ Byron's words concerning an ambiguous dinner at his house with an excessive use of mirrors in the furniture, and the presence of young men exclusively, seem to confirm Lewis's tendencies (Macdonald *Monk Lewis* 60).

⁷⁸ The contexts that are supposedly funny in *The Monk* can be found in a number of episodes: one is when Raymond's new valet, Theodore, decides to dedicate himself to poetry and starts reading his ode to his master. An almost grotesque episode is when Agnes, dressed as the Bleeding Nun, is forced to ring the bell of her castle after missing the meeting with Raymond for their elopement. The waiting church assembly's ironical description is stressed by Leonella's unconscious comic interlude (the old woman looking for a young suitor). Elvira's ghost's apparition, and old women's funny reactions is particularly dissonant with the previous description of her tragic death.

⁷⁹ Translations made by different writers of one same work, were produced during the eighteenth century contributing to cultural dissemination of the Classics (Gillespie and Hopkins 14-15). Dryden and Pope's translations were steadily read throughout the century (Gillespie and Hopkins). All classical authors were popular during the whole of the eighteenth century. "The activity of translation is quite expressly the animating power in the English poetic tradition, and the decisive influence in canon-formation" (Hopkins and Gillespie 19). The authors also argue that literary translations determined the progress of culture by introducing both the known and the unknown. Texts such as Dr. Johnson's *Lives of the Poets* (1779-1781) and *Works of the English Poets, from Chaucer to Cowper* (edited by Alexander Chalmers 1810) provide evidence of the vast quantity of British poets' literary translations, which had a "profound influence on the embryonic English novel" (Rounce 327).

⁸⁰ The text of *The Guardian* published in 1822, edited by A. Chalmers indicates that the anecdote is not attributed to Addison but to Richard Steele instead (296).

⁸¹ The literary premise by Lewis was particularly astute because he hid other forms of evident plagiarism. A text he does not mention is Jacques Cazotte's *Le Diable Amoureux* (1772), whose analogies with the novel by Lewis are multiple and were noticed by a number of reviews, in particular the one in *The Monthly Review*, Number 23, (August 1797), as reported by Ellis (101) and Groom (XXV). Actually, Cazotte's novel is rather different. The protagonist is less naïve than Ambrosio and his dialogues with the devil's emissary have a strong philosophical connotation. Cazotte, who had become part of the Illuminati, was guillotined in 1792. He is considered the initiator of the novels of '*fantaisie*'.

⁸² The short Latin epigraph, which introduces Addison's tale, is taken from *The Metamorphoses* (IV, 428), and features goddess Athena's sibylline sentence from Ovid's masterpiece, stating that "it is useful to learn from our enemies as well".

⁸³ Addison's (or maybe Steele's) short story follows the canons of effective brevity, which characterized many eighteenth-century and Enlightenment authors. He poses an assortment of literary precepts that include a classical approach adapted to a moral theme, placed in an Oriental setting. Interestingly, each cultural element in Addison's story will be differently developed during the century.

⁸⁴ The *Life of Lorenzo de Medici* (1795) by William Roscoe (1753-1831) and the *Histoire des républiques italiennes au moyen âge* (1807-26) by the Swiss Jean Charles Léonard de Sismondi (1773-1842) introduced a special periodization and the division between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, a difference that was later developed the French historian Jules Michelet (1798-1874) that is considered as "the inventor of the concept" (Jo Tollebeek 254).

⁸⁵ "It is likewise to be observed that we regard the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* as works of genius, not only because there appears an astonishing display of Imagination in the invention of characters and incidents in those admired productions, but also because that imagination is regulated by the nicest judgment" (Duff 24). Duff claims that genius is the result of education and is based on three ingredients, Imagination, Reason and Taste. Reason can control imagination and taste gives the right measure to both.

⁸⁶ "Le peintre doit étudier plus précisément l'œuvre du plus grand peintre parmi les poètes, du poète qui possédait le plus talent plastique, c'est-à-dire celle d'Homère, œuvre qui fait figure d'une seconde nature, tant la représentation qu'il fait de la nature est parfaite". The page number corresponds to the French edition. The translation from the French is my own.

⁸⁷ Elvira's greatest mistake is when she interrupts the idyll between Antonia and Lorenzo de Medina and imposes a cruel separation. Her misunderstanding of events is even more dangerous than Antonia's cognitive "inertia". In fact, Lorenzo is the only one who could have helped her obtain her inheritance and who could have protected Antonia from evil.

⁸⁸ It is also connected to Elvira's incomprehensible censorship of the Bible.

⁸⁹ Strongly reacting to Lorenzo's sudden infatuation for the girl, Don Christoval utters words of disapproval and repeats Antonia's aunt words, underlining his absolute and aristocratic contempt for such a match: "Why, surely, Don Lorenzo, You cannot be mad enough to think of making a Wife out of this Grand-daughter of 'as honest a pains-taking Shoe-maker as any in Cordova'?" (*The Monk* 24). The development of the story confirms that class division cannot be overcome.

⁹⁰ Incapable of rejecting Matilda's insistent request to remain in the monastery once she has revealed her identity, Ambrosio secretly muses that "as Matilda was wealthy, her favour might be of essential benefit to the Abbey" (*The Monk* 66). Power and money seem to be real temptations for the monk.

⁹¹ I would suggest that Lewis's novel may have aimed at re-establishing the apparently lost social order by getting rid of lower middle classes in favour of the aristocracy. By virtue of this idea, *The Monk* may not be defined as a metaphorical exaltation of the turmoil of the French Revolution. It does not seem to clearly show the anxiety about the times that critics such as Parreaux, Paulson, Haggerty, Williams and Clery, among others, thought they could identify in Gothic fiction.

⁹² Ironically, this is in opposition to what Mathias had vehemently claimed. He accused *The Monk* of proliferating the revolutionary seeds. Gamer maintains that "Mathias's conservatism could appear hysterical, even by the standards of the time" ("Genres for the Prosecution" 1050).

⁹³ It might be interesting to notice that ghosts populating Lewis's novel are the spirits of women who had a tragic and violent death within the story. The ghosts appearing in the two major plots (Raymond's narration and Ambrosio's tale) belong to women, respectively the Bleeding Nun and Elvira. Their basic difference is that the nun belongs to the past, while Elvira is still part of the present and her character is shown both in bodily and spiritual form. The spirit in *Otranto* was masculine and represented the patriarchal order of the past.

⁹⁴ Euripides lived in the fifth century BC. He is said to have produced at least ninety plays of which only less than twenty survive today, although this is more than we have inherited from Aeschylus and Sophocles. Many of his titles feature female protagonists: *Iphigenia in Aulis*, *Iphigenia in Tauris*, *Electra*, *The Trojan Women*, *Medea*, *Andromache*, *Hecuba*, *Bacchae*, and *Helen*.

⁹⁵ Kewes clarifies that "the hierarchy of the three tragedians are revised in our period. In the Restoration, Aeschylus had been seen as the most primitive of the trio, and none of his plays had been either translated or adapted for theatrical presentations. With Aeschylus largely neglected, Sophocles was universally seen as the most refined of the three tragedians, and Euripides as the most adept at representing extremes of emotions" (248).

⁹⁶ It might be worth noticing that both Orestes and Ambrosio are not totally responsible for their crimes. Electra persuaded Orestes with all possible justifications to kill his mother. Matilda pertinaciously pushed Ambrosio to commit his crimes.

⁹⁷ Elvira and Clytemnestra typify the figures of guilty mothers. In psychoanalytical terms, both Elvira and Clytemnestra may be compared to Lewis's mother, who was responsible for betraying his father with a lover and giving birth to a little girl, after abandoning him and his siblings. It may be argued that by punishing Elvira and Antonia, Lewis was punishing his mother and his little half-sister.

⁹⁸ Ambrosio strangles his mother when also Antonia is present, though the girl is asleep.

⁹⁹ Ovid's *Heroides* "combines a collection of single letters in elegiac verse imagined as written by deserted heroines of epic and tragedy with several paired letters featuring epistles of men answered by women (...). Ovid's letters "attained great popularity" and became a model for writers such as Pope that used them for his *Eloisa to Abelard* (Garth Tissol 204-205). They included Phaedra's dramatic letter to Hippolytus. *A Sicilian Romance* includes the young Count Hippolytus [sic], who is Maria de Vellorno's object of passionate desire. Offended and enraged by the young man's firm rejection, she tries to take revenge on her step-daughter Julia, Hippolytus's only love. Humiliated and doomed, she commits suicide. It can be inferred Ann Radcliffe was acquainted with the Greek tragedy as well.

¹⁰⁰ The wounded pride for unrequited love unexpectedly transforms women into ruthlessly revengeful beings against Orpheus in Book XI of Ovid's *Metamorphoses*.

¹⁰¹ Seneca's rendering of the story in his *Phaedra* (ca. 54 CE) develops following Euripides' mould. However, the emphasis is on Poseidon's ravaging sea-storm, which causes Hippolytus' death. I would exclude Seneca's influence in the description of Ambrosio's end.

¹⁰² As in Virgil, the mysterious noise is an omen of horrible crimes (see chapter dedicated to Radcliffe).

¹⁰³ Horace was “much admired in the eighteenth century, and extremely influential in the English satirical tradition” (McEvoy Note 1, 443). However, the satirical tone in Marivaux’s style at the beginning of the novel appears to be incongruous with the subsequent tragic development.

¹⁰⁴ Curiously, Horace also shared biographical aspects with Lewis. He was a young man of many means thanks to his father, who had become a public officer when Caesar ruled Rome. In spite of not being a nobleman, he was given the best education and, like young aristocrats in ancient Rome, was sent to Athens to complete his studies. He dedicated himself to poetry and lived under his friend Maecenas’ protection. He rejected the post of Emperor Augustus’s secretary, as his great interest was literature.

¹⁰⁵ Gillespie and Hopkins, as well as scholars of literary translation, frequently use the verb “to english”, and they indicate the transformation of the Greek and Latin language into the elegant and poetic English version.

¹⁰⁶ For Ovid’s presence in *Clarissa* see Murray, “Classical Myth in Richardson’s *Clarissa*: Ovid revised”, which demonstrates the importance of the Latin poet in Richardson’s novel. Richardson was originally considered as “an author without a sufficient knowledge of the Classics to join modern experience to ancient stories. Though in all probability his schooling ended in his tenth year, and he had less Latin and Greek than Shakespeare, he developed a high degree of cultural literacy from reading, printing, theatre-going, and conversation. Prints caricatures, and book illustrations provided him with traditional iconographic images. *Clarissa* itself contains ample evidence of Richardson’s knowledge of classical mythology, mostly in the letters of Lovelace, who compares himself to a formidable list of Olympians” (116). Richardson’s case is comparable to Radcliffe’s.

¹⁰⁷ Rosario/Matilda considers Ambrosio “endowed with every virtue”, a real “divinity” (*The Monk* 56). Although the term ‘divinity’ conveys a denotation of religiosity, the deeper sense here shifts toward a connotation of pagan cult. Later Matilda calls Ambrosio her “idol” (61).

¹⁰⁸ The case of hypergamy or, more commonly, marrying up, described in the novel provoked serious debate for a maidservant’s successful social climbing, and for multiple sexual allusions in a text that proposed to represent a moral lesson.

¹⁰⁹ Matilda compares Ambrosio to a god. Antonia is described as a nymph. Like an Olympian god, Ambrosio seduces and rapes the beautiful nymph.

¹¹⁰ The exquisite Madonna’s mysterious and apparently smiling eyes in the painting evoke Leonardo’s *Mona Lisa*. *The Louvre* opened a few years after the *Uffizi* in 1793, as a consequence of the expropriations during the Revolution. The *Mona Lisa* became part of the permanent collection in 1797. Even if he did not have the chance to admire the art collection, Lewis could have heard about the famous painting.

¹¹¹ Philosopher Massimo Fusillo gives a very clear definition: “l’*ékphrasis* è la rappresentazione verbale di una rappresentazione visiva” (34), it is a verbal description of a visual representation (the translation is mine). The definition given by Philip Hardie is more complex as it incorporates a double structure involving what he calls “absent presence”. The first level creates the illusion of presence thanks to the power of the visual arts. The second level “tests the writer’s power” who creates the illusion of an illusion (173).

¹¹² Fusillo dedicates a chapter to this literary device (that we found in Radcliffe as well) by analysing the *ékphrasis* of Achilles's shield in Homer's *Iliad* (34-39) whereas Hardie examines the same *trope* in *The Metamorphoses* (Narcissus and Pygmalion's episodes).

¹¹³ Dryden's translation of Ovid highlights the virginal aspect of the statue: "Pleas'd with his Idol: he commends, admires, adores; and last, the Thing ador'd, desires. A very Virgin in her Face was seen, and has She mov'd a living Maid had been: One would have thought she cou'd have stirr'd, but strove with Modesty, and was asham'd to move" (l: 166). Dryden's description of the statue can be applied to the painting Ambrosio admires and to the beauty of Matilda. The 'modesty' recalls Antonia's main attribute.

¹¹⁴ Ironically, the novice Rosario enters the monk's cell seconds after Ambrosio has implored God to transform the beautiful Madonna into a real creature. In fact, the novice Rosario turns out to be the stunning Matilda, whose sensuality is dangerously seductive, and she is a perfect copy of the painting. Brewer, among others, argues that Matilda's ambiguity is connected with transvestism.

¹¹⁵ "Quas quia Pygmalion aevum per crimen agents viderat, offensus vitiis, quae plurima menti femineae natura dedit, sine coniuge caelebs vivebat, thalamique diu consorte carebat" (*Metamorphoses*, X, 243-246).

¹¹⁶ The first time we see Ambrosio is in the distance while he is reciting his powerful sermon and mesmerizing his audience. Now we can see him alone and we are inside his mind. Whereas he admires the imaginary woman in the painting, he despises all the other ones: "What charms me, when ideal and considered as a superior Being, would disgust me, become a Woman and tainted with all the failings of Mortality" (*The Monk* 41).

¹¹⁷ Pygmalion's story is one of the few with a happy ending where the couple has no apparent obstacles. Considering the figure of Matilda we can observe that she is the only character left untouched by the tragic events of the novel. In the end, she completely disappears. Most critics see her disappearance as a confirmation of her being an infernal agent. However, my hypothesis is that she may be a figment of Ambrosio's imagination, who actually continues fantasizing in front of the mysterious painting until his lustful rage explodes with the only person of the female sex, Antonia, with whom is able to be in contact. In this sense, I am partially influenced by Robert Kiely's hypothesis on *The Mysteries of Udolpho*: he posits that the dangers in the story do not exist but are simply within the mind of the protagonist.

¹¹⁸ The duality Rosario (male)-Matilda (female) may not be grasped by a Spanish-speaking person, as both names are considered to be female. It is not possible to say whether Lewis did this by mistake, or on purpose.

¹¹⁹ A striking detail is when Lorenzo, who has just assisted to a sacred representation in the convent, notices a beautiful girl who is personating Saint Clare during the procession. Surrounded by "silver clouds", "dazzling light", and with a luminous "wreath of diamonds" on her head, she is enchanting the audience. She is Virginia de Villa-Franca: but Lorenzo "considered her only as a fine Statue" (348).

¹²⁰ Matilda collects flowers for Ambrosio (43).

¹²¹ Salmacis and Matilda are aggressive female agents, like the Naiads in Beckford's tale. (See section on Beckford).

¹²² Miles argues that "Gardens presented a particularly rich *topos* of 'associative aggregates', of connotative figures that might induce a visual train in the viewer. But there was always, in Gothic writing, latent danger". He mentions that T. Warton "commenting on the *Bower of Bliss*" in his *Observations on the Faerie Queene of Spenser* (1754) had noted that "Sir Guyon's temptation

consists in great measure in the gratification of sense afforded by a delicious garden" (*Gothic Writing* 59). That nature had a strong and risky connection with desire had been variously highlighted by a series of authors. Like Warton, Priestly warned that there was need for vigilance in descriptions of nature. The "garden" could turn into a perverse pastoral, as in *The Monk*.

¹²³ "Pueri rubor ora notavit (nescit enim, quid amor) (...) 'Desinis? Aut fugio recumque'". (*Metamorphoses*, IV, 239-330/ 336).

¹²⁴ "Nec duo sunt sed forma duplex, nec femina dici, nec puer ut posit, neutrumque et utrumque videtur" (*Metamorphoses*, IV, 378-380).

¹²⁵ Philosophically, it can be interpreted as an ideal Platonic union.

¹²⁶ Some short scenes renovate the mystery surrounding Matilda's concrete presence or absence. When Don Ramirez and the archers arrive in the crypt, they look for "the Fugitive's retreat" (393). Once the crime is discovered, the Capuchins as well as "all Madrid" talk about "the Perpetrator". When the trial (420) of the Inquisition begins "He was conducted to a spacious Hall" (422). Matilda seems to become real only within Ambrosio's mind. On the contrary, she is absent when the scene is described by an external narrator and it is not presented by Ambrosio's perspective. She completely disappears when Ambrosio is hopelessly ruined. She may also embody a rich and spoiled girl, who is saved by her powerful and wealthy family.

¹²⁷ Various critical analyses of *The Metamorphoses* and/or ancient mythology highlight the intrinsic element of rape, which is frequently present in the relationships between the sexes, either divine or human. See L. C. Curran. "Rape and Rape Victims in the *Metamorphoses*". *Arethusa*, II, 1, 2 (1978), 213-241. S. Deacy and K.F Pierce. *Rape in Antiquity: Sexual Violence in the Greek and Roman Worlds*. London: Gerald Duckworth Ltd., 2002. Mary Lefkowitz claims it is not possible to speak of rape in "Seduction and Rape in Greek Myth". Angeliki E. Laiou (ed.) *Consent and Coercion to Sex and Marriage in Ancient and Medieval Societies*. Washington D.C.: Dumbarton Oaks, 1993.

¹²⁸ It partially reproduces Lovelace's rape of Clarissa, thus confirming the intertextuality of *The Monk* (Macdonald "A Dreadful, Dreadful Dream" 159).

¹²⁹ In *Vathek*, the same trick is organized by the emir, whose goal is however to protect his daughter and her fiancé.

¹³⁰ Byblis' tragic story, in love with her twin brother Caunis, is a further instance of an Ovidian myth partially absorbed in *The Monk*. Byblis finally commits suicide for her incestuous sin (*Metamorphoses* Book IX).

¹³¹ Marilyn Butler's observation is particularly useful. The clear-cut distinction between the Middle Ages and the Renaissance that we use today was not felt in past centuries, and figures such as Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarch, Shakespeare, Ariosto and Milton were seen as a global expression of the past (122). The epigraph of Chapter II in Vol. I presents Tasso's verses exalting the joys of Love, taken from *L'Aminta* (1573), a pastoral poem. Lewis was an admirer of Ariosto and Tasso's poems that are generally chosen to introduce idyllic scenes, as in *The Monk*, or to introduce a context that is meant to be libertine as in *The Romance of the Forest*.

¹³² Lewis probably knew Italian better than Spanish. Don Christoval exclaims with an Italian word "Diavolo!" (31) - an interjection of surprise at the entrance of Lorenzo's sister Agnes, thus discovering that a letter with a proposal of elopement is directed to her. Other linguistic mistakes are the use of the word 'Segnor' instead of the Spanish 'Señor', which may be caused by the process of transliteration as well. Elvira's sister Leonella uses an Italian expression "caro sposo" (311) to describe her husband.

¹³³ In a letter he specifically says that during his journey to Inverary, he spent his time reading Ariosto (Baron Wilson I: 295).

¹³⁴ "Sigismonda and Guiscardo" is one of the stories selected and translated by Dryden for his collection of *Fables Ancient and Modern* (1700) which included stories by Homer, Ovid, Boccaccio, and Geoffrey Chaucer.

¹³⁵ The *Wrongs of Woman's* young protagonist, unjustly confined to an asylum, has received some books that "come from a wretch like her" (...) "She took up a book on the powers of the human mind; but, her attention strayed from cold arguments on the nature of what she felt, while she was feeling, and she snapt the chain of the theory to read Dryden's Guiscard and Sigismunda" (Wollstonecraft 85-6). This is a clear evidence of what Gillepsie describes as the unconscious reception of works through translation and their incorrect attribution. In spite of being an intellectual person, Maria considers the story to be Dryden's creation, and does not know that the original is by Boccaccio.

¹³⁶ Dante's inventions and Boccaccio's imagery were not only appreciated by Gothic writers but also by Romantic poets such as William Blake (1757-1827), Percy B. Shelly (1792-1822) and John Keats (1795-1820). Keats dedicated a poem to Lisabetta, calling her Isabella, inspired by a lecture on Boccaccio by Hazlitt. Her iconography is reproduced by William Holman Hunt in his Pre-Raphaelite painting, *Isabella and the Pot of Basil* (1868), dedicated to her story.

¹³⁷ Dryden borrows from Dante and creates a strange *mélange* in "Theodore and Honoria from Boccace" included in his *Fables Ancient and Modern*. In Dryden's version, the anonymous knight's ghost is embodied by the famous Florentine poet Guido Cavalcanti. The setting of the story, Ravenna and its surroundings, is the place where Dante completed the *Divine Comedy* and spent his last years. Cavalcanti, one of his best friends, had died young of some unknown fever when on exile for political reasons.

¹³⁸ The phrase shows an analogy with line 84 in Coleridge's *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1798): "The Sun now rose upon the right". It is interesting to notice how phrases, sounds and images by Lewis, Radcliffe and other Gothic writers were absorbed by the Romantics of the first and the second generation in spite of their apparent dismissal of the Gothic authors.

¹³⁹ In his study of music in the Gothic novel, Noske found some examples in *The Monk*. Theodore sings old ballads in a "sweet voice" (169), moreover music is an element, which accompanies the arrival of demonic entities in the dungeon of the monastery. Intriguingly, Matilda plays the harp charmingly. Music is turned into a harsh sound with the devil's final appearance when thunder can be heard. The most anguishing silence surrounds Ambrosio in the end.

¹⁴⁰ Stanstead Hall; his sister Sophia wrote that the majestic building had affected their imagination while they were children, particularly because one wing of the castle was reported to be haunted (Baron Wilson I: 62).

¹⁴¹ Tracing the relationship between visual arts and the imagery in Lewis is more complicated than in Beckford or Radcliffe. However, the historical dynamics of the period can help us determine the impact of the visual arts, and in particular, of Italian art, which was remarkably strong in Britain. C.P. Brand claims that there was "a flood of Italian art" coming to England during the French Revolution and The Napoleonic Wars. Brand explains that this phenomenon was due to a series of reasons. The first one was that French noblemen's art collections had been ravaged and sold (when not destroyed) during the Revolution. The second is that Italian collectors and aristocratic families preferred to "sell their art-treasures rather than risk having them plundered". Then French ships carrying art works were sometimes intercepted by British ships. All of this contributed to an important art market dominated by British collectors (Brand 138).

¹⁴² Biographies have been written by Penelope Treadwell and Martin Postle among others, highlighting the importance of the visual production of this artist for the second part of the eighteenth century, including his informal portraits of the Royal Family and theatrical scenes with famous actors of the time.

¹⁴³ Blake McHam is one of the various Latin scholars that posits the importance of Pliny the Elder's encyclopaedic work on nature for visual arts. Lamgmuir equally supports the hypothesis that Pliny's descriptions of deserts influenced painters from the late Gothic to the Renaissance, such as Giovanni di Paolo (1417-1482), Adam Elsheimer (1578-1610) and many others (113).

¹⁴⁴ A famous female painter who depicted various sensual nursing Madonnas is Artemisia Gentileschi (1593-1652), who became well-known during the seventeenth century for her paintings' original technique. Her rape at a very young age was transfused in her works where the clash between male and female characters has generally dramatic tones. She was internationally popular and she was invited to spend some years in Britain by Charles I (Tiziana Agnati 37-42).

¹⁴⁵ "The Medicean Venus is a statue of Venus. A Roman copy after original c.150-100 BC, from the collection of the Medici family who ruled Florence in the fifteenth Century" (McEvoy note 9, 444). Following the fashion of imitation of Antiquity, the Venus de Medici was probably the most widely reproduced form during the century. An amateur painter and etcher, Claude-Henry Watelet (1818-1786) described the Venus as an example of perfect proportion in his poem *L'Art de Peindre* (1760). Watelet introduced the picturesque in France in his *Essai sur les Jardins* (1774) based on James Thomas Whately's *Observations on Modern Gardening* (1770).

¹⁴⁶ Antonia is compared to a mythical wood nymph "an Hamadryad" (*The Monk* 9) when Lorenzo and Don Christoval see her for the first time. Both Antonia and Matilda are characterized by a special aura, which is connected with classical canons of beauty.

¹⁴⁷ Beckford's auction included a profusion of French paintings (see section on *Vathek*). Boucher produced frescoes, paintings and drawings in large quantities. He cooperated with Etienne Maurice Falconet (1716-1791), the director of Sèvres Porcelain Company, sending him drawings. His friend, the etcher and engraver Gilles Demarteau (1722-1776), reproduced many of his paintings and drawings (Rossi Pinelli 49) thus creating an even greater visibility for his works. After the Revolution, many confiscated French paintings ended up being sold to British collectors (Brand).

¹⁴⁸ This aesthetic statement can be found in Part V, Section VII, ("How words influence passions") which is the last section of the *Enquiry*: "Now, as words affect, not by any original power, but by representation, it might be supposed, that their influence over the passions should be but light; yet it is quite otherwise; for we find by experience, that eloquence and poetry are as capable, nay indeed much more capable, of making deep and lively impressions than any other arts, and even than nature itself in very many cases" (334).

¹⁴⁹ On 18 March 1804 he wrote to his mother (italics and orthography are reproduced as in Lewis's writing): "Our opinions, certainly on the subject of our last letter, seem to be very different; for I hold that a woman has no business to be a public character, and that in proportion as she acquires notoriety, she loses delicacy. I always consider a female author as a sort of half-man". After mentioning the publication of a novel written by his *protégé's* mother, he writes about his novel and the problems he had after its publication. "I never before heard of *your* being *accused* of having written '*The Monk*'. This goes nearer to put me out of humour with the book than all the fury of the "*Pursuits of Literature &c*". What the world knows I care not, provided I do not know it". Later he formally asks his mother to avoid publishing: "But surely it is not worth while to take the trouble of composing a work, when 'to avoid the dangers of authorship your only safety, perhaps, would be in the want of genius in its composition'. You will equally avoid those dangers by *not* publishing your work, and, at the same time have the advantage of keeping

your want of genius a secret. *Au reste*, I should much doubt there being a single soul at present existing who thinks '*The Monk*' was written by any body but myself" (Baron Wilson I: 278-281).

¹⁵⁰ They do not apparently correspond to editing activities. His mother may have been involved in the process of writing, but publishing in her name would have been out the question. The former Mrs. Lewis still carried the stigma of her elopement.

5. Conclusion. Some Final Ideas

Winckelmann's *History of Ancient Art* and Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* were not the only significant texts to be published in 1764. *An Essay on Crimes and Punishments* was printed in the same year in Italy. After eighteen months, it had already been reprinted six times and had been translated into French. When it was first "englished" in 1767, it was initially attributed to Voltaire.¹ The anonymous translator claimed that "perhaps no book, on any subject, was ever received with more avidity, more generally read, or more universally applauded" (iv). Quite eager for anonymity in a period when the Austrian government, in control of the Northern Italian territories, used the ruthless secret police to suffocate any form of revolt, the real author was the Marquis Cesare Beccaria (1738-1794). One of the best jurists of the epoch, and a member of the Milanese Enlightenment, he described the typology of crimes and the forms of punishments. It was especially the second part of the essay that aroused incredible attention. It concerned the forms of tortures used to obtain confessions from suspects. His descriptions of suffering were so vivid that they provoked a remarkable impression on readers. The methods of the Inquisition were described and the horror of torture depicted with realistic details. Beccaria did not intend to be morbid or indulge in violent and gory scenes. His idea was to denounce the inhumanity and the uselessness of torture in a fair legal system.² If Winckelmann promoted the study of the Ancients and Walpole was renewing ancient *romance*, Beccaria provided the collective imagination with real-life tales

of horror that were soon to be transposed into the most frightening Gothic imagery.

One of Addison's aesthetical meditations had appeared in the *Spectator* in 1711. He had praised the introduction of the supernatural to provoke "pity" and "terror" in the manner of playwrights (Clery 34). Shared by Dryden and Dennis, his ideas were modern but at the same time relied on "the authority of the classical past" (Clery 35). Trying to explain the birth of the Gothic, Clery also posits that progressive individuality, inscribed in the novel's fruition, determined the need for private forms of mystery. Whereas defining the early Gothic remains a hard task, it is possible to argue that the beginning of its manifestations were induced decades before its flowering.

The Gothic was vast and differentiated at the end of the century. After the single cases of Walpole in the 1760s and Clara Reeve in the 1770s, the decade of the 1780s introduced Sophia Lee, Beckford and Charlotte Smith. The 1790s saw the beginning (and end) of Ann Radcliffe's creations and Matthew Lewis's single literary phenomenon, which were imitated by a constellation of horror novels, many of them of very low quality. Although forms of mutual influences can be detected, each author was characterised by a special style, which was not replicated in the other novelists.³ Together with individual taste, the writing modes most likely reflected each writer's cultural knowledge. Moreover, I may argue that the difference between genuine Gothic authors and the mass of their more or less anonymous imitators is that Beckford, Radcliffe, and M. Lewis, among others, had a complex opinion of their own works and they were motivated by the desire for cultural recognition. I would claim that it is

difficult to ascertain whether they were conscious about the Gothic as it was seen *a posteriori*. However, I would argue that they wanted to create a personal form of narrative, which actually remained a *sui generis* example. There were authors who peripherally used Gothic styles to pass their ideas or to obtain more success as is the case with Fanny Burney and her work *Camilla*. Smith was experimental in her literary production and introduced Gothic atmospheres to attract a wider public. Others, such as Godwin and Wollstonecraft, used the Gothic mode to make their socio-political messages more alluring. Roche and Charlotte Dacre (1771-1841) tried to sublimate Radcliffe and Lewis's stories respectively, albeit with different results. Like Smith, Eliza Parsons exploited the trend to earn economic independence during the 1790s. Horror stories from national and foreign authors invaded the market. Although they could not compare with Walpole, Beckford, Radcliffe and Lewis, their propagation contributed to cast a durable shadow on the early Gothic. Cheap and low quality imitations of Gothic novels provoked a sense of growing animadversion for the *genre*. As a consequence, it was relegated to an inferior level of literary production in the decades to come. Burlesque versions of the Gothic reinforced the idea that the *genre* was risible and popular writers' irony conveyed lasting prejudices.⁴

However, not all Gothic was the same. My major assertion is that the distinctive trait that helps to recognise a higher form of Gothic is the discernible use of Classical, Medieval and Renaissance influences that could be detected in Beckford, Radcliffe and Lewis. I posit that it was not a casual choice and that the evidence is provided by the pervasiveness and reiteration of themes from the

past in all three authors' works. Lucretius, Virgil and Ovid dominate the novels by Beckford, Radcliffe and Lewis respectively. Beckford embodies Lucretius' hedonism, Radcliffe exalts Virgil's pastoral and bucolic ideals, and Lewis reproduces Euripides and Ovid's inescapable sense of tragedy. Indirect but constant references to Dante, Petrarch, Boccaccio and Ariosto denote that all three authors had been able to absorb the cultural messages of the medieval and Renaissance⁵ past while they reflected the cultural and literary atmosphere of the eighteenth century. Influences from their contemporary poets, novelists and philosophers mark the superior level of knowledge provided by the three early Gothic writers. I would also claim that they showed a cosmopolitan cultural sense in the enlightened tradition of their time. Although their novels became popular for their mechanisms of suspense that attracted a large public, I would argue that they provided elegant narratives for the eclectic cultural implications, which could be appreciated by a highly cultivated minority.⁶ I would suggest that the tradition of literary translation supported by Stuart Gillespie and David Hopkins played a fundamental role in the development of literature and the adaptation, either conscious or unconscious, of cultural influences, both diachronic and synchronic.

I would also like to underscore some important points that characterise these authors' works. The first is the rich quality of their prose. Prose works before Beckford, Radcliffe and Lewis featured different kinds of narratives and were connected to stereotyped ways of writing. Recognisable prose styles were a characteristic of authors belonging to previous generations, which may have been ironic in Jonathan Swift, realistic in Defoe, sentimental in Richardson, mock-

heroic in Fielding, caustic in Smollett, and satirical in Sterne. Beckford as well as Radcliffe and Lewis tended towards a richly flexible prose that could include different registers and styles, thus giving originality to a way of writing that was traditionally considered less dignified than other literary or poetic works. The second aspect is the poetic value of their language, which competes with poetry and elevates the formal level of their writing. The three authors show a penchant for poetry, either reproducing passages of famous poems or inserting poetic images in their narrations, which were meant to be idyllic, romantic, and dramatic at the same time. The third important feature that I have identified is that the three authors played with the notion of *genre*. Whether it was Beckford's Oriental tale or Radcliffe and Lewis' *romances*, any categorisation turns out to be hardly possible, because the three authors explored various narrative modes and their stories went towards multiple directions before the *finale*. They opened doors for narratological possibilities. A fourth element that is particularly interesting is the interrelation with iconographies that demonstrate the pictorial qualities of the three writers' prose, generally adorned with elegant forms of word painting, which is not limited to Ann Radcliffe exclusively.

I would argue that the three novels were a cultural and intellectual compendium of the long eighteenth century and of the previous epochs to which they blended new narrative forms and complex sensibilities. They also accentuated the love for the visual that had dominated the century (Price, Miles "The Eye of Power"), by enriching their prose with a myriad of pictorial images.

A further blow against the Gothic was romantic authors' negative opinions. The Romantics probably wanted to distance themselves from the clear

matrix of their imagery. Gamer observes that “the language of influence between writers, whether of direct borrowing or of wilful misreading, cannot adequately represent the mediating forces at work, let alone capture the richness of the appropriations that do occur. While ‘Gothic’ may be a notoriously shifting and complex object of study for any literary historian interested in *genre*, its rapid changes and instability at the end of the eighteenth century, rather than frustrating us, should form part of our definition of the term” (“Gothic Fiction and Romantic Writing” 93). Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron and other Romantic authors wanted to maintain their high profile, and be acknowledged as the beginners of a new poetic model. Interestingly, they also wrote imitations of Antiquity, both Greek and Latin, but they tended to camouflage Classical influences in their works (Gillespie *English Translation and Classical Reception*).⁷

That Classicism and other sources from the literary past were of extreme importance in the whole century can be established by analysing distinct authors. Elements from Antiquity were introduced where they were least expected. D. Hopkins suggests that interaction with the ancients acts at various levels in a number of eighteenth-century works. Dafydd Moore highlighted the profusion of examples from Homer, Virgil and the Classics in an epic that was meant to exalt Northern culture and tradition in opposition to ancient epic of the South. *The Works of Ossian* (1765) contain records of Homer and Virgil’s classical examples, taken from the original versions or from Dryden and Pope’s translations. Although they were inserted in the poem with a different objective in mind, they reveal the significant, unrelenting effect of Classicism.⁸

Mary Robinson (1757-1800) was a Romantic poetess and playwright, whose scandalous life unfortunately impaired critical opinion regarding her opus. Her poetic oeuvre included odes, sonnets and plays that were appreciated by Coleridge, who started a public correspondence with her.⁹ Mary Robinson created a variety of works, whose themes were love, nature, and the position of women in society. Notwithstanding the Romantic nature of her works, she was deeply inspired by the Classics and authors from the Middle Ages and the Renaissance. One of her dramatic dialogues in verse is between Petrarch and his lover Laura. On other occasions, she imitated Sappho and various Greek authors in her poetic compositions. She is a further example of the co-existence of steady classical roots forging new currents in the mutability of literature.

Mystery lingers on the three writers of the last decades of the century. Like Radcliffe's obstinate silence, Beckford and Lewis's verbose letters cannot really be deciphered. Inscrutability and secrecy also characterised their novels as they introduced thrilling suspense in anticipation of modern crime stories. The places they depicted transcended reality and acquired a legendary halo. They reproduced mankind's desire to recreate mythical regions (*Eco Storia delle terre e dei luoghi leggendari*).¹⁰ Their inventive *romances* also conceived complex universes made of innumerable *nuances*, where classical moulds and images, partially hidden, could be discovered under the surface. Together with their constant allusions to Antiquity, to Medieval *romance* and to Renaissance beauty, they shared one more interesting and disquieting feature. Beckford, Radcliffe and Lewis' uncommon endings turn out to be strange compared to their narrations. The *finales* are unusual and, in a way, incomplete. It is as if the

authors were not able to write the definite end to their stories. They showed a sort of existential anguish that made them leave their works open (*Eco Opera Aperta*)¹¹, waiting for other images and worlds to be born from them.

Intriguingly, an iconic image for the early Gothic can be found in one of the most mysterious paintings of the Renaissance inspired by Lucretian axioms (Stephen J. Campbell). It is the quintessential representation of mystery where a threatening storm is lingering on a tranquil landscape. In the background a stately and ghostly castle is illuminated by moonlight. A man is standing on the left, his gaze turned towards a beautiful woman taking care of a child. Giorgione's enigmatic painting seems to enclose the narrative tropes of Gothic with all its beauty, its mystery, and its horror.

¹ The 1775 English edition still bears Voltaire's name on the frontispiece.

² Townshend remarks the surprising popularity of the text that was known by a vast public (276) thanks to the clear and precise language of the law. Brand had noticed the remarkable popularity of Beccaria's text.

³ T.S.Eliot's exalted intertextuality conceives literary and artistic creations as forms of ideal dialogues between different authors. In the case of the Gothic production, we can trace one-way influences and mutual influxes. Horace Walpole was the beginner of new themes and narrations and his *romance* is a revised and personal form of a literary mixture. Clara Reeve was influenced by Walpole and in her turn provided a basic model of writing, which was developed in two different directions, one towards the historical novel adopted by Sophia Lee and one towards the *romance* adopted by Radcliffe. Radcliffe's style was exacerbated in its horrors by Lewis. Radcliffe borrowed themes and devices from all her predecessors and also from Charlotte Smith. Lewis used Radcliffe's ideas in *The Monk* and she replicated some of images by transmuting them into *The Italian*.

⁴ Austen was pitiless with C. Smith and Radcliffe who were her favourite targets. In *Emma*, she ridiculed *The Romance of the Forest*, while *Northanger Abbey* was partly a parody of *the Mysteries of Udolpho*. *Sense and Sensibility* was a pessimistic remake of Charlotte's Smith *Celestina* aimed at highlighting her predecessor's narrative weaknesses as well as clichés of her contemporary female writers. Austen also ironised the "horrid novels" that were a compulsory reading for her impressionable protagonists. Among them are Eliza Parsons' *The Castle of Wolfenbach* (1793), *The Mysterious Warning* (1796) and Roche's *Clermont*. It was Austen's novel that allowed literary critics to discover the concrete existence the so-called horrid novels that Austen had most probably read.

⁵ Spenser, Shakespeare and Milton are included in the complex literary universes of the three authors. Even though their mould is generally more evident in Radcliffe, they played an important role for Beckford and Lewis as well.

⁶ Both the implicit and explicit scandalous contents in the three authors' novels may have been responsible for the less than tepid recognition of their cultural value.

⁷ The situation is ambivalent. Gamer uses the words "attraction and repulsion" to describe the strange relationship between the Romantics and the Gothic. He paradoxically posits that their Romanticism may have scattered from a form of literary opportunism. Initially oriented towards legitimising their form of Gothicism, which was unsuccessful, they not only distanced themselves from it but also systematically ventilated its inferiority. Lewis' ruin was started by Coleridge and completed by Byron (98). Notwithstanding, Gothic resisted and offered the building blocks for further development. Gillespie also underlined Wordsworth's ambiguity (see note 75 in section on *Vathek*).

⁸ According to D. Moore, Macpherson's omission of explanatory notes in subsequent editions may be thought-provoking. In the beginning, Macpherson may have chosen to add paratextual details, whose function was to compare *Ossian* to ancient texts and therefore reinforce its epic and poetic value. On the contrary, their elimination may hypothetically betray the preoccupation of avoiding too an evident hypotext behind his collection.

⁹ In an article on Robinson and Coleridge ("Mary Robinson and the Abyssinian maid"), Fulford provides an interesting insight in the political value of their correspondence. In spite of his harsh moralism, Coleridge supported Robinson because "she was the victim of aristocratic establishment". However, he also appreciated the rhythm and musicality of her poems. Robinson was Polwhele's explicit target, together with Wollstonecraft.

¹⁰ One of the last works by Eco, it was translated in English as *The Book of Legendary Lands*.

¹¹ Originally written in 1962, and revised in 1976, *The Open Work* is not only the title of one of his most famous essays, but also one of the bases of his aesthetic philosophy.

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ANNEX

Art Works cited

George Lambert. *A Pastoral Landscape with Shepherds*, 1744



Thomas Wright of Derby. *Dovedale by Moon light*. 1784



Antoine Watteau. *Embarkation for Cythera*. 1717



Giovanni Battista Piranesi. *A Perspective of the Tempe of Isis.*
The Cornerstone of the same Gateway, 1740s ca.



La perspective du Temple d'Isis, et du petit Temple, Egypte, tels qu'ils se trouvent aujourd'hui, ainsi que d'une portion de l'Abbaté qui les environne.

Giovanni Battista Piranesi. *Untitled*, 1745 ca.



Masaccio. *Adam and Eve*. 1425 (ca.) detail



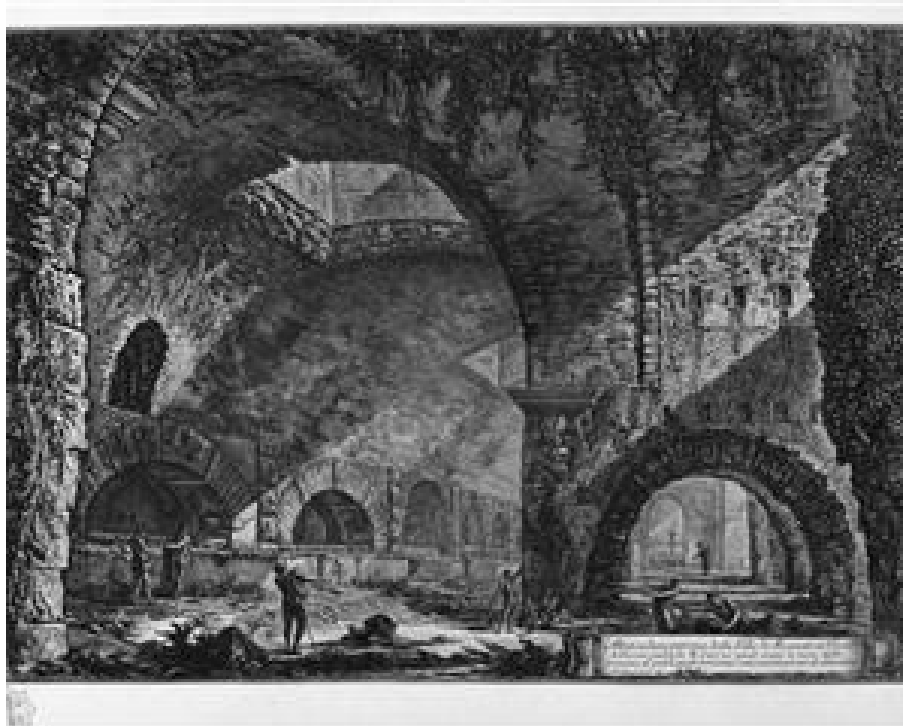
Richard Wilson. *Solitude*. (Etching and engraving), 1778



Gaspard Dughet (attributed) *Landscape with a Storm* (1750s?)



Gaspard Dughet. *Latium Landscape with Shepards and a castle*, 1660 ca.



Piranesi. *Ruins of Maecenas' Villa*. 1764

Piranesi. *Castello dell'Acqua Giulia*, (Acqua Giulia Castle) 1760 ca.



Nicolas Poussin. *Spring*, 1664



Joseph Wright of Derby. Virgil's Tomb, 1785



Salvator Rosa. *Classical landscape with Hermes, Argo and Io*, 1653 ca.



Domenico Veneziano, Saint John, 1445-50 ca.



Rafael. *Madonna del Cardellino*, 1506



Leonardo Da Vinci (attributed) . *Madonna Litta*, 1500 ca.



jean Fouquet. *Virgin and Child*, 1452



Jan Gossaert. *Madonna and Child*, 1527



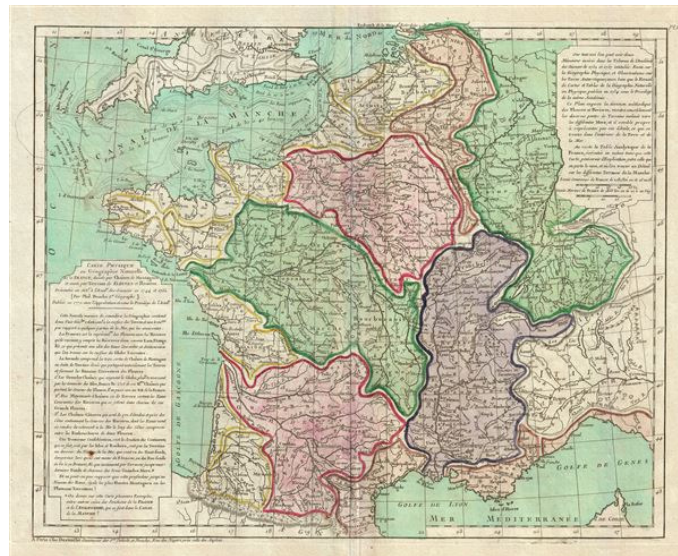
Boucher. La Toilette de Venus, 1751



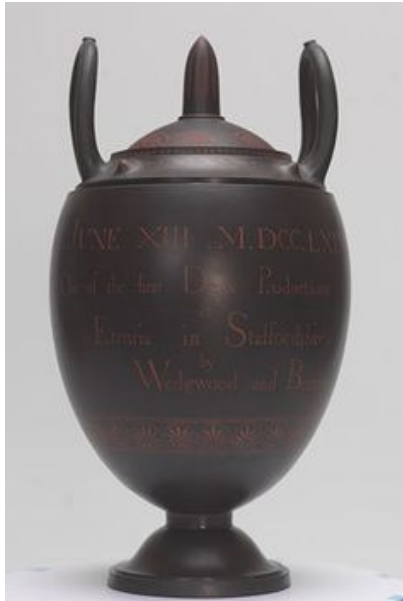
Johan Zoffany. *The Tribuna of the Uffizi*, 1778



Philippe Buache. *Map of France, 1770*



Wedgwood. *Etruscan First Day Vase*, 1769



Wedgwood. *Etruria Vase*, 1770s



GIORGIONE. *The Tempest* 1508

